



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT REGARDING RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN GEORGIA

As delivered by Ambassador Guttorm Vik
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
10 July 2008

Mr. Chairman,

Norway joins the European Union in expressing deep concern over the latest violent incidents in the Georgian autonomous regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. We find it deeply regrettable that the conflicts have escalated to a level resulting in the loss of lives. Just back from an interesting, but unfortunately, not very encouraging visit to Georgia, I am more convinced than ever that political dialogue and confidence building are the only keys to ease tensions between the parties to the conflict. We urge all parties to show maximum restraint in both words and deeds, and to refrain from any actions which could risk escalating the situation even further.

The violent incidents in South Ossetia, Georgia, also underline the urgency of an increase in the number of OSCE monitors, in order to increase transparency and ease tensions.

In the wider picture, Norway remains concerned over the unilateral actions taken by the Russian Federation to establish legal links with the *de facto* authorities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. We are troubled by the massive granting of Russian citizenship to inhabitants in the breakaway republics. Norway is also concerned with the recent build-up of forces and the deployment of military railroad construction troops in Abkhazia. A neutral facilitator and peacekeeper should do its utmost to lower the tensions that currently exist in the region, we therefore urge the Russian Federation to reverse these measures.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, Norway reiterates her commitment to Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognised borders.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman