



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

Norway in response to the Foreign Minister of Georgia,
H.E. Ms. Ekaterine Tkeshelashvili

As delivered by Deputy Permanent Representative Asbjørn Brandsrud
to the Special Meeting of the Permanent Council, Vienna
28 August 2008

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

The Norwegian delegation most warmly welcomes Foreign Minister Tkeshelashvili to the meeting, whose address we listened to in sincere earnestness. Madam Minister, let me express our deeply felt sympathy for the grave situation Georgia now lives through.

Mr. Chairman,

Like the European Union and others Norway deeply regrets President Medvedev's announcement on 26 August that the Russian Federation recognises South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states. In our view this decision is without basis in international law and contrary to the principles of the ceasefire agreement signed by the Russian Federation.

Recognition of Georgia's breakaway republics is not a constructive contribution to the efforts being made to find peaceful resolutions to the conflicts. We are worried about the consequences for Caucasus and other regions and for the Russian Federation's relations with Europe and other countries. Russia's international reputation will be harmed by the unilateral measures she has now taken.

Mr. Chairman,

Norway reiterates that conflicts and disputes must be settled by peaceful means, based on the UN Charter's precondition of respect for territorial integrity of all member states as well as the principles of the Helsinki Final Act. In this context we also refer to the statement made by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Mr. Knut Vollebaek, on 25 August where he underlined that (quote) *"both the past and the present have shown us that when States take unilateral actions to defend, protect or support their citizens or "ethnic kin" abroad, there is a risk of increasing political tensions, including inter-State conflict and regional instability. One of the bedrocks of international law is that the protection of human rights, including minority rights, is*

primarily the responsibility of the States where minorities reside. This also holds true in the case of minorities holding dual citizenship” (end of quote).

Mr. Chairman,

We again call on the Russian Federation to abide by international law as the foundation for resolving this crisis; and to implement urgently and in full her commitments to withdraw all forces to their pre-7 August positions. Norway expresses her full support for the activities undertaken, not least by the OSCE and the EU, to promote a peaceful settlement of the conflicts in Georgia. Again, Norway reiterates her commitment to Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity within her internationally recognised borders.

Thank you.