



06.04.2006

OSCE Permanent Council No. 604

EU Statement on Georgia

1. The EU is pleased with the generally positive outcome of the meeting of the Joint Control Commission in Vladikavkaz on 27-29 March 2006. The EU hopes that the establishment of a working group on the existing peace initiatives will move the peace process forward speedily. The EU welcomes the continuing cooperation between the sides with regards to the OSCE-led Needs Assessment Study. The EU is looking forward to an early agreement on a package of projects and to subsequent follow-up. The EU also welcomes the agreement between the sides to re-start examining joint policing opportunities, as well as the intention to continue consultations with all sides on the draft law on restitution.
2. On the other hand, the EU regrets continued violations in and around Tshkinvali of the provisions of the ceasefire agreements. In this context, the EU is concerned about a recent incident in South Ossetia, Georgia, as highlighted in the latest Spot Report by the OSCE Mission to Georgia of 31 March 2006. The OSCE Military Monitoring Officers observed an anti-aircraft gun within the Ossetian administered area of the zone of conflict. This is again a violation of the Sochi and other agreements, that there should be no heavy equipment in the zone of conflict. The OSCE Military Monitoring Officers met with an aggressive and hostile attitude by South Ossetian personnel. The EU is concerned that on the occasion of the March 30 incident, personnel of the Joint Peace Keeping Force did not react in a timely manner, thus enabling the removal of the artillery piece by armed South Ossetian personnel in the meantime. This is now the sixth occasion that South Ossetian heavy armoured equipment or weapons have been observed in or near Tshkinvali by OSCE MMOs since December 22, 2005. This underlines the need for an effective monitoring of the implementation of the Sochi and other agreements as well as the importance of the mission's role in this respect.
3. Moreover, apparently not all South Ossetian personnel are aware of the fact that the Mission should at all times be enabled to conduct independent monitoring in line with the Mission's right of freedom of movement within the area of responsibility of the JPKF, as stipulated in the Memorandum of Understanding with the South Ossetian side. Other parties in the Joint Control Commission should remind the South Ossetian side of the right of the Mission to conduct independent monitoring. The EU calls on all sides to keep addressing the situation in the zone of conflict at the meetings of the Joint Control Commission.
The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

*Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process