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OSCE Permanent Council No. 600

**EU Statement in response to the report by the Head of the OSCE Mission to Georgia,  
Ambassador Roy Reeve**

1. The EU welcomes the Head of the OSCE Mission to Georgia, Ambassador Reeve, to the meeting of the Permanent Council today and thanks him for his very informative report.
2. Concerning the conflict in South Ossetia, Georgia, the EU welcomes the upcoming holding of the long overdue meeting of the Joint Control Commission in Vladikavkaz on 27 and 28 March. All sides should now show the political will to overcome remaining differences in the spirit of the 'Statement on Georgia', adopted at the OSCE Ministerial Council in December 2005. The momentum of Ljubljana should not be lost; especially since the sides to the conflict have acknowledged that the current peace initiatives contain a lot of common points and are offering new opportunities to move the political process forward.
3. The EU reiterates that it stands ready to contribute actively, and in every relevant forum, to accelerating the process of peaceful conflict resolution overall, based on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders.
4. The tense and unstable security situation in the zone of conflict remains a matter of great concern. It is highly regrettable that since September 2004 no action has been taken to implement the demilitarisation measures, which were agreed by the JCC in the past. The EU welcomes the unilateral steps towards demilitarisation, as announced by the Georgian government, and would like to learn more about progress achieved.
5. The EU underlines the importance of effective law enforcement cooperation between the sides, as joint police actions can indeed create confidence among the communities. As reported by the Mission, measures towards practical cooperation and joint police training have been agreed upon in JCC context and need implementation.
6. The EU is disturbed by South Ossetian obstruction of OSCE patrols within the zone of conflict, as reported by the Mission. This obstruction is totally unacceptable. 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.
7. The EU welcomes the fruitful co-operation of all sides on the economic Needs Assessment Study, whose results may prove instrumental to stability, confidence building, and for improving the climate for dialogue in the peace process. Recalling previous EU contributions to the economic rehabilitation of South Ossetia, the EU will, based on the results of the Needs Assessment study, consider further support.
8. The EU also welcomes the successful implementation of the Training Assistance Programme for the Georgian Border Guards and commends the excellent work of the training team. The EU is looking forward to receiving a proposal by the Mission for a new capacity building programme, based on the request by the Georgian Border Guards to carry out a new programme. Such programme would greatly benefit Georgia and its neighbours. The EU hopes that the work of the OSCE Mission and of the EU Border Support Team on reform of the Georgian Border Guard continue to complement each other.
9. In the Human Dimension, the EU notes the Mission's concern that basic questions of human rights, due process, and independence of the judiciary, penal conditions and media freedoms require more effective action by and attention from both Government and Parliament. The EU is particularly concerned about the lack of judges for criminal case proceedings and unacceptable conditions in pre-trial detention centres.
10. While the EU welcomes the reported openness and willingness by the Government to discuss these issues, a more systematic approach may indeed be required to address certain shortcomings. In this respect, the EU recalls the strategy for reform of the criminal justice system,

which was developed by the Georgian government with the assistance of the EU JUST Themis Rule of Law mission and which is to be implemented in the near future.

11. In conclusion, Mr Chairman, the EU supports the cross dimensional approach of the Mission in assisting its Georgian partners towards peaceful conflict resolution, the establishment of rule of law, good governance and democratic structures. In the view of the EU, the Mission has an indispensable role to play in this respect. The EU welcomes the good cooperation between the Mission and the host authorities. The EU thanks Ambassador Reeve and his staff for their work and wishes them success in the future.

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