

Closing statement of the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Georgia
Meeting between the Georgian and Abkhaz sides
Geneva, 17-19 November 1997

Excellencies,

1. As you are aware, this meeting between the Georgian and Abkhaz sides was a resumed session of an earlier meeting held in July, also in Geneva. It was part of the Secretary-General's initiative to revitalize and reactivate the Georgian/Abkhaz peace process.
2. It was unfortunate that little progress was achieved at our meeting in July. However, at the same time, the very lack of progress at the July meeting served as an impulse to renew with even more determination our effort to achieve tangible progress. A series of bilateral and multilateral activities and consultations in the weeks following the July meeting built up the momentum which brought us together at this resumed session, and we can therefore derive legitimate satisfaction from the fact that we were able to reach agreement on a document which establishes a concrete mechanism and machinery to re-energize the peace process.
3. The progress achieved at this meeting would not have been possible if the two sides had not realized the need to seek compromise rather than engage in acrimonious debate. It is therefore to them, in the first place, that I want to pay tribute and express my gratitude. My appreciation also goes to the Russian Federation whose tireless efforts and broad support were very much a factor in the

successful outcome of this meeting. Here, I would like to mention, in particular, the personal and energetic involvement of First Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Boris Nikolaievich Pastukhov, who despite his busy agenda, was able to be with us for several days here in Geneva. The list would not be complete if I did not mention the political and moral support that I received from the members of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General.

4. Though we achieved progress at this meeting, we are all very much aware that the document agreed by the two sides is only a beginning and certainly has not changed in any way the situation on the ground. We now have to start the implementation process of what we agreed on at this meeting. I count on both sides to continue showing the same spirit of cooperation they have demonstrated during this meeting in looking for workable solutions to the many problems that have now to be addressed. I know that I can count on the continued support of the Russian Federation, in its capacity as facilitator, as well as on that of the OSCE and the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General. Let me remind you that the continued presence of UNOMIG and the collective peacekeeping forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States is essential in stabilizing the situation in the conflict zone.

5. I could not conclude without expressing my deep appreciation and gratitude to the Swiss authorities who have not only assisted us with the many arrangements in connection with this meeting, but have also been a warm and friendly host in this beautiful city of Geneva.