

2nd Day of the Seventh Meeting
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DECISION No. 1

Ministers appreciate the efficient co-operation between Georgia and the OSCE. They stress that the OSCE should intensify its efforts in the conflict resolution process as well as in monitoring the situation in the sphere of building democratic institutions in Georgia. Ministers emphasize that the lack of progress in the peaceful settlement of conflicts in Georgia requires additional measures to increase the safety of the international personnel and transparency regarding military armaments and equipment in the conflict areas.

Ministers acknowledge certain progress in the process of peaceful settlement of the conflict in the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, Georgia, in particular with regard to the military-security situation and the return of refugees and internally displaced persons. They stress that there is an immediate need to increase efforts on all sides to promote the activities related to political negotiations on the definition of the political status of this region and facilitation of the process of the return of refugees.

Ministers express the hope that meaningful progress will soon be achieved with respect to a peaceful solution of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia. They strongly condemn the violent acts in the Gali District of Abkhazia, Georgia, in May and June 1998, resulting in mass destruction and the forcible expulsion of Georgian population. In this respect they recall numerous United Nations documents, the OSCE Budapest Decision and in particular the Lisbon Summit Declaration where utmost support for the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders was underlined. They also condemn the terrorist activities. They stress the need to refrain from the use of force, the importance of the prompt, immediate, safe and unconditional return of the refugees to the Gali District and the immediate conclusion of bilateral negotiations on this issue as a precondition for a comprehensive settlement of the conflict.

Ministers stress that the Geneva process is a leading framework for the peaceful settlement of conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, and underline the primary responsibility of the United Nations for advancing this process. They declare the OSCE's readiness to assist the United Nations in their efforts. They appeal to the United Nations and the Group of Friends of the United Nations Secretary-General, as the initiators of the Geneva process, and the Russian Federation, as a facilitator, to activate their efforts with a view to implementing the already adopted decisions and undertakings. They ask the OSCE Chairman-in-Office to stay in close contact with the Friends of the United Nations Secretary-General on all matters concerning Abkhazia, Georgia. They declare the OSCE's readiness to participate in the implementation of a final and comprehensive settlement including assistance to a local administration of the Gali District, particularly with regard to a joint mechanism of investigation of criminal cases in the zone of conflict and law enforcement body.

Ministers stress that promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, monitoring of the smooth and safe return of refugees, and assisting in the development of legal and democratic institutions and processes, in particular in establishment of a joint local administration in the Gali District with the participation of the returnees, can contribute to a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia. In that respect they ask the OSCE Chairman-in-Office to conduct with the United Nations Secretary-General, and within the OSCE, appropriate consultations exploring the utility of the establishment of an OSCE office in the Gali District. Ministers emphasize that all necessary measures should be taken to ensure the safety of the personnel of this office.

Ministers express their support for the Georgian-Abkhazian dialogue, in particular on confidence-building measures. The Ministers encourage the parties to follow up the decisions on confidence-building measures and to further study the proposals put forward at the Athens Meeting on Abkhazia, Georgia. If all parties agree to a similar meeting in Istanbul, this may provide a good opportunity. Ministers stress the possible role of the UN/OSCE Human Rights Office in Sukhumi in monitoring and assisting in implementation of any confidence-building measures between the two parties.

While reiterating that reconstruction measures cannot be a substitute for political settlement, Ministers acknowledge the importance of the rehabilitation of the conflict areas and regions and the return of refugees for advancing the process of the conflict settlement. They call on all parties to create conditions appropriate for such measures to be implemented. They undertake to explore the possibilities of a more active OSCE role in this respect in close liaison with international donors and institutions which are already active in this field in Georgia, and as a complement to their activities.