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Security Council
4065th Meeting (AM)

SC/6751
12 November 1999

SECURITY COUNCIL, IN PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENT, DEMANDS DEEPENED
COMMITMENT TO PEACE PROCESS IN ABKHAZIA, GEORGIA

The Security Council this morning reiterated its demand that the parties to the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, deepen their commitment to the United Nations-led peace process, in particular, by resuming regular meetings of the Coordinating Council.

In a statement read out by its President, Danilo Türk (Slovenia), the Council also expressed its agreement with the Secretary-General that the parties must continue to meet regularly regardless of the constraints of domestic policies. Further, the Council welcomed the acceleration of bilateral contacts at all levels between the two sides, and called upon the parties to agree upon and take concrete steps towards the full return to Abkhazia, Georgia, of refugees and internally displaced persons in safe and dignified conditions.

While noting with satisfaction that the security situation had improved slightly, in particular, the reduction of tension along the line of separation of forces, the Council also noted the persistent precariousness of the security of United Nations personnel. The Council stated that the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) should keep its security arrangements under constant review in order to ensure the highest possible level of security for its staff. Reiterating its condemnation of the hostage-taking of seven United Nations personnel on 13 October 1999, the Council welcomed their release, and stressed that the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

The Council noted with grave concern that no progress had been made on the key issues of the settlement, particularly the core issues of the status of Abkhazia, Georgia. It supported the Special Representative's intention to submit proposals to both sides on the distribution of constitutional competencies between Tbilisi and Sukhumi, as part of a comprehensive settlement, with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. Also, it reiterated its view that any action by the Abkhaz leadership in contravention of the principles of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia was unacceptable.

The Council warmly welcomed the appointment of Dieter Boden of Germany as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of UNOMIG, which the parties should see as an opportune moment to give renewed impetus to the search for a political settlement. It paid tribute to UNOMIG and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) peacekeeping force, and stressed the importance of their continued close cooperation in the performance of their respective mandates.

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The meeting began at 11:26 a.m. and adjourned at 11:33 a.m.

Presidential Statement

The full text of the presidential statement, to be issued as S/PRST/1999/30, reads, as follows:

"The Security Council has considered the report of the Secretary-General concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, of 22 October 1999 (S/1999/1087).

"The Security Council warmly welcomes the appointment of Mr. Boden as resident Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and hopes the parties would see this as an opportune moment to give renewed impetus to the search for a political settlement.

"The Security Council welcomes the acceleration of bilateral contacts at all levels between the Georgian and Abkhaz sides and calls upon them to continue to expand their contacts.

"The Security Council notes with grave concern that, notwithstanding positive developments on some issues, no progress has been made on the key issues of the settlement, particularly the core issue of the status of Abkhazia, Georgia. The Council, therefore, strongly supports the intention of the Special Representative to submit as soon as possible further proposals to both sides on the distribution of constitutional competences between Tbilisi and Sukhumi, as part of a comprehensive settlement, with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders, working in close cooperation with the Russian Federation, in its capacity as facilitator, the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

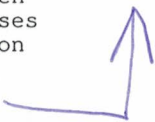
"The Security Council reiterates its demand that the parties to the conflict widen and deepen their commitment to the United Nations-led peace process, in particular by resuming regular meetings of the Coordinating Council and of its working groups, and agrees with the Secretary-General that they must continue to meet regularly regardless of the constraints of domestic politics. The Council calls upon the parties to agree upon and to take, in the nearest future, the first concrete steps towards the full return to Abkhazia, Georgia, of refugees and internally displaced persons in safe, secure and dignified conditions. The Council reminds the parties that this would enable the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to provide substantial material assistance. The Council reiterates its view on the unacceptability of any action by the Abkhaz leadership in contravention of the principles of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia.

"The Security Council notes with satisfaction that the security situation has slightly improved, in particular the reduction of tension along the line of separation of forces, while noting the persistent precariousness of the security of the United Nations personnel. The Council reiterates its condemnation of the hostage-taking of seven United Nations personnel on 13 October 1999, welcomes the release of the hostages, and stresses that the perpetrators of this unacceptable act should be brought to justice. The Council welcomes UNOMIG, keeping its security arrangements under constant review in order to ensure the highest possible level of security for its staff.

"The Security Council pays tribute to Mr. Bota for his valuable work while serving as Special Representative of the Secretary-General. The Council welcomes the important contributions that the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) and the Collective Peacekeeping Forces of the Commonwealth of

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Independent States (CIS peacekeeping force) continue to make in stabilizing the situation in the zone of conflict, notes that the working relationship between UNOMIG and the CIS peacekeeping force has been good at all levels, and stresses the importance of continuing and increasing close cooperation and coordination between them in the performance of their respective mandates."



Secretary-General's Report

When the Security Council met this morning to continue its consideration of the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, it had before it a report of the Secretary-General, dated 22 October, on the situation there (document S/1999/1087).

The report was submitted in response to a Council request of 30 July that the Secretary-General report on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, within three months of that date.

The Secretary-General reports that his meeting with President Shevardnadze reinforced his conviction that efforts to find a comprehensive solution should aim at answering the core question -- the political status of Abkhazia. His Special Representative would work closely with the Russian Federation, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General before submitting proposals to both sides.

The acceleration of bilateral contacts between the Georgian and Abkhaz sides was welcome, the report states. Implementation of projects agreed on in their Athens and Istanbul meetings had built visible bridges and generated positive media coverage of both sides. A third bilateral meeting on confidence-building measures was envisaged for this year, to be held at Yalta, at the invitation of Ukraine.

The parallel Geneva process bodies should also continue to meet regularly, he reports, regardless of the constraints of domestic politics. They were an avenue for international community involvement in the peace process; important because both sides called for international support.

Continuing displacement of thousands, one year after active hostilities ended, was distressing, the Secretary-General states. Both sides must take first steps towards full return, under safe, secure and dignified conditions, of refugees and internally displaced people to the region, by signing a document providing for their return to the Gali district (under its old borders) and for economic rehabilitation measures.

The security situation in Gali and Zugdidi had improved slightly, he reports, and the number of incidents there had decreased. But the 13 October hostage-taking in the Kodori Valley clearly showed the difficulties under which UNOMIG operated. Georgia's steps, resulting in the unconditional release of the hostages, were welcome, as was the readiness of the CIS peacekeeping force to help. He was confident the Georgian Government would take legal action to bring the perpetrators to justice.

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