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UN Security Council Members & EU Condemn Russian Overflights During Closed-Door Session; Germany Continues Peace Efforts

“Such violations of Georgia’s sovereignty are unacceptable,” EU declares, reiterates call for Russia to reverse de facto annexation of Abkhazia & South Ossetia

United Nations Security Council members and the European Union yesterday condemned Moscow’s intentional violations of Georgian airspace on July 8. The statements add to a growing international consensus that Moscow has become a party to the conflict in Abkhazia, thus negating its ability to serve as a peacekeeper or mediator.

“The EU is particularly concerned by the statement of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs which confirms the flights of Russian military aircraft over Georgia,” the EU said during the closed-door UN Security Council session, according to a statement. “Such violations of Georgia’s sovereignty are unacceptable.”

This was the second time in recent weeks that the Security Council has convened to address blatant violations of Georgian sovereignty by Russia. On May 30, it met to study a report by the UN Observer Mission in Georgia that confirmed a Russian fighter shot down and destroyed a Georgian unmanned aerial vehicle in Georgian airspace on April 20. Russia has violated Georgian airspace several other times this year, downing several Georgian drones.

During the Security Council meeting, Georgian Ambassador Irakli Alasania detailed all of Russia’s recent acts of aggression and violations of its peacekeeping mandate. He emphasized that the July 8 overflights—which Moscow officially justified by saying they were meant to “cool hot heads in Tbilisi”—were a brazen violation of the UN Charter and international law. Georgia also invited the Security Council to visit Georgia to more carefully examine the situation on the ground.

The majority of Security Council members supported the Georgian position, with numerous states echoing Tbilisi’s demands for the UN to review Russia’s peacekeeping mandate; for Russia to withdraw illegal troops from Georgian territory that surpass agreed limits; and for the international community to establish a means of more closely monitoring Russia’s serial violations of Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The EU also renewed its demand that Russia reverse its April 16 decree that establishes legal and other ties with the separatist regimes in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The decree—which Russia has used to illegally increase its military, political, and financial presence in Georgia’s territories—is seen as marking the de facto annexation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

“The EU reiterates its earlier call to the Russian Federation not to implement the Presidential decree of 16 April 2008 to establish official ties with institutions of the de facto authorities in South Ossetia and Abkhazia without the consent of the Government of Georgia,” the EU said.

The Security Council meeting took place following several days of intensive diplomacy by the European Union to address the growing tensions stoked by Russia’s actions in the separatist territories.

German Foreign Minister Franz-Walter Steinmeier traveled last week to Tbilisi, Abkhazia, and Moscow to discuss the Germany Foreign Ministry’s three-phase peace proposal.

The Government of Georgia has welcomed the active involvement of Germany in advancing the peace process. However, as presented, the German plan does not address the proximate cause of the recent, dangerous escalation that has taken place in the conflict zones—the role and actions of the Russian Federation. Russia has been a central player in degrading security in Georgia. As the first stage in any peace process, the Government of Georgia seeks the reversal of the legal, military, and economic violations of Georgian sovereignty resulting from Russia’s actions.

Meanwhile, following a meeting on Friday with his Georgian counterpart, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner vowed to travel to Georgia in September to continue the EU's intensified diplomacy in the region. France currently holds the Presidency of the EU.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

EU Statement to the Security Council (July 21)

[Main elements \(English version\)](#)

The European Union expresses its grave concern about the rise in tension and the increased number of incidents in the conflict zones in Georgia, including bombings and armed incidents.

The EU is particularly concerned by the statement of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs which confirms the flights of Russian military aircraft over Georgia. The EU reiterates that the Security Council affirmed in all its resolutions, and notably in Resolution 1808, "the commitment of all Member States to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized, land, sea and air borders." Such violations of Georgia's sovereignty are unacceptable.

The EU reiterates its earlier call to the Russian Federation not to implement the Presidential decree of 16 April 2008 to establish official ties with institutions of the de facto authorities in South Ossetia and Abkhazia without the consent of the Government of Georgia.

The European Union reiterates its support for UNOMIG, which is playing a stabilizing role in the conflict zone, as recalls Resolution 1808 of the United Nations Security Council of 15 April 2008. It especially deplores the death of an interpreter who worked for the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia in the service of peace. It urges parties to fully cooperate with UNOMIG.

The EU condemns any act which might raise tensions and jeopardize the search for a peaceful and sustainable solution to the conflict. It urges both parties to avoid all acts that might heighten tensions and to comply fully with the relevant Security Council agreements and resolutions, including Resolution 1808 (2008) of 15 April. The European Union calls for parties to promptly finalize a commitment to the non-use of force and the return of refugees and internally displaced persons.

The European Union calls upon parties to engage in dialogue under the existing negotiation formats with a view to conflict settlement. It expresses its support for ongoing efforts within the framework of the Group of Friends of the UNSG on the conflict in Abkhazia, as well as its support for the OSCE for South Ossetia.

The European Union is prepared to play an active political role to support these efforts, including by promoting dialogue and contributing to the approved trust-building measures between the parties. It will continue to work towards a negotiated settlement, which will respect Georgia's territorial integrity and its internationally recognized borders. It is against this backdrop that Mr Steinmeier has just presented an initiative to Tbilissi and Sukhumi Mr. Kouchner announced that he will travel to Georgia in the near future on behalf of the French Presidency of the European Union.

Full text of Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs statement:

http://www.mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=461&info_id=7076

Full text of UNOMIG report confirming Russia's April 20 downing of Georgian aircraft:

http://www.unomig.org/data/file/970/080402_sg_report_en.pdf