

LAST UPDATED: **APRIL 18, 2008, 11:30 • TBILISI**

World Condemns Russia's Breach of Georgia's Sovereignty: NATO, EU, U.S. & Others Call for Reversal of Decree That Amounts to the Legal Recognition of Abkhazia & South Ossetia

I. INTRODUCTION

Leaders around the world are condemning President Vladimir Putin's move on April 16 to establish legal ties between Russia and the separatist territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia.

The move could have profound consequences on the prospects for peace in the region, on the fate of hundreds of thousands of persons forcibly expelled from the territories, and on relations between Russia and the West. Russia's provocation comes just days after Georgia tabled an ambitious peace plan that would offer unprecedented autonomy to Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, together with others, urged Moscow to reverse the measures. U.S. Senator John McCain deplored Russia's de facto annexation of Georgian territory and its choice of confrontation over cooperation. Council of Europe parliamentarians called on the UN to replace the Russian peacekeepers in Abkhazia.

II. INTERNATIONAL REACTION

"I am deeply concerned by the actions Russia has taken to establish legal links with the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. NATO Allies, at their recent Summit in Bucharest, reiterated their support for the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of Georgia. The Russian steps undermine that sovereignty. I urge the Russian Federation to reverse these measures."

NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer

"We are concerned about these unilateral decisions, we have always supported Georgia's territorial integrity. We have always believed that this type of conflict must be resolved through dialogue."

Christina Gallach, Spokesperson for EU Foreign Policy Chief Javier Solana

"Moscow has announced that it will establish governmental links directly with Abkhazia and South Ossetia without the approval of the legitimate Georgian government. Such a move is in violation of international law and deserves strong condemnation by all countries committed to the rule of law.... Russia is furthering its policy of de facto annexation that undermines security and stability in the region. Unfortunately, Russia's leaders have chosen a course of confrontation rather than cooperation."

"We must not allow Russia to believe it has a free hand to engage in policies that undermine Georgian sovereignty. Georgia has acted with restraint in its response and should continue to do so. I hope that European leaders, along with international organizations such as the OSCE and the UN, will join in strongly condemning Russia's move."

U.S. Senator John McCain

The UK is concerned "that the proposed package of Russian unilateral measures relating to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Georgia, would only increase tensions in the region."

Sir Brian Fall, UK Special Representative for the South Caucasus

"Russia is openly siding with the separatists, calling into question Russia's facilitator role... Georgia understandably views the instructions as a provocation and a serious challenge to its sovereignty and territorial integrity."

"This move, coupled with Russia's recent lifting of CIS sanctions that opens the possibility for military assistance to Abkhazia, has significantly increased tensions in an already volatile region. In this regard, we expect Russia to live up to its recent assurances that Russia will abide by its international commitments and responsibilities not to supply weapons to conflict zones and to maintain Russian sanctions on the transfer of military services and equipment to separatist regions."

Julie Finley, U.S. ambassador to the OSCE

"Yesterday's news that Moscow will be taking a number of measures to establish closer ties with the Georgian areas of Abkhazia and South Ossetia is deeply disquieting. Georgia's territorial integrity contributes to the stability of the wider Caucasus region, where not least Russia should have a very great interest in stability in particular."

"Moreover, this comes after Georgia presented far-reaching new proposals on how the conflict over Abkhazia could be settled. In my opinion these proposals could form an important basis for political talks on the question - but these would, if anything, be undermined by measures of the kind Moscow now seems to be considering."

Carl Bildt, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden

"Such actions destabilise situation and threaten security and stability in the whole region. I urge Russia to respect Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty and to continue dialogue with Georgia's government in Tbilisi."

"I welcome the position expressed by NATO Secretary General Jaap De Hoop Scheffer regarding Georgia's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence, and I encourage EU governing bodies and EU Member States to have and state their clear position regarding Russia's actions."

Valdas Adamkus, President of Lithuania

**STATEMENT BY MEMBERS OF THE
PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

The undersigned,

1. express deep concern over the decision of the Russian Federation to establish bilateral legal links with the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia;
2. note that this destabilising decision undermines the internationally recognized sovereignty of Georgia;
3. consider that the current policy trend toward integrating part of Georgia's territory into the Russian Federation violates international law and severely undermines the Government of Georgia's efforts at peaceful reunification;
4. recall that the Abkhazia separatist de facto rule was established by forcibly expelling hundreds of thousands of civilians on the basis of ethnicity; underscore that Russia's support to these rebels effectively legitimizes an internationally-recognized act of ethnic cleansing;
5. recall Russia's freely undertaken obligations and commitments to the Council of Europe, in particular as regards its commitment to conflict resolution through dialogue;
6. urge Russia to reverse this decision and respect its commitment to the territorial integrity of Georgia;
7. further note that in light of these developments, Russian troops operating as CIS peacekeepers under the ceasefire agreement of 14 May 1994 are not neutral but are a party to the conflicts;
8. call upon the UN Security Council to: replace the Russian contingent with truly impartial UN peacekeeping forces; boost the mandate and resources of UNOMIG to progressively replace CIS peacekeepers across Abkhazia, Georgia.

Signed by

EÖRSI Mátyás, Hungary, ALDE

AČAS Remigijus, Lithuania, EDG

BEMELMANS-VIDEC Marie-Louise, The Netherlands, EPP/CD
BILOZIR Oksana, Ukraine, EPP/CD
Van den BRANDE Luc, Belgium, EPP/CD
CIRCENE Ingrida, Latvia, EPP/CD
COSARCIUC Valeriu, Moldova, ALDE
GARDETTO Jean-Charles, Monaco, EPP/CD
GROSS Andreas, Switzerland, SOC
HAJIYEVA Gultakin, Azerbaijan, EPP/CD
HERKEL Andres, Estonia, EPP/CD
ILAȘCU Ilie, Romania, NR
JAKAVONIS Gediminas, Lituanie, ALDE

JONKER Corien W.A., The Netherlands, EPP/CD
KALANDADZÉ Nino, Georgia, EPP/CD
LEJAVA Paata, Georgia, EPP/CD
LUNDGREN Kerstin, Sweden, ALDE
MARTY Dick, Switzerland, ALDE
NADIRADZÉ Maia, Georgia, ALDE
NAKASHIDZÉ Nino, Georgia, ALDE
PASHAYEVA Ganira, Azerbaijan, EDG
RUSSELL-JOHNSTON Lord, United Kingdom, ALDE
SEYIDOV Samad, Azerbaijan, EDG
TEVDORADZE Elene, Georgia, ALDE
VAREIKIS Egidijus, Lithuania, EPP/CD