

Annex 71

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on the situation in the Tskhinvali region

The developments of 6 August 2008 have made it clear that, despite the restraint demonstrated by the Georgian Government, the criminal separatist regime of Tskhinvali continues its armed attacks against peaceful civilians and units of the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs, with the purpose of inciting large-scale confrontation and thwarting direct dialogue. As a result of these provocations, a peace-loving population is suffering.

By taking irresponsible steps and jeopardizing peaceful civilian lives, the separatists' criminal regime is providing more proof that it is on the verge of collapse.

The only way that separatists manage to maintain their grip on power is through military, human and technical resources provided to them by the Russian Federation.

The military assistance rendered to the separatists' criminal regime by the Russian Federation, in violation of all agreements, cannot be assessed in any other way than as another act of aggression committed against Georgia.

Georgia once again calls on the Russian Federation to exert pressure on the separatists to establish peace in the region and put an end to the systematic bombing of civilian-inhabited villages. At the same time, Georgia strongly urges the Russian Federation, rather than encouraging separatists to undertake military actions, to ensure the separatists' engagement in the negotiations with the Central Authorities of Georgia and in the process of addressing existing differences in a civilized way.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia emphasizes that all responsibility for the recent development of events falls on the Russian Federation: it is from the Russian territory, through the Roki tunnel that the mercenaries, military hardware and armament used to raid peaceful villages in the Tskhinvali region keep penetrating Georgia; it is Russian-delegated "siloviki" that continue to staff the criminal separatist regime; it is due to the Russian Federation's unconstructive position that the local population has incurred damages in the last few days, and the situation keeps deteriorating day by day.

These developments must lead the Russian Federation to the conclusion that the only way to achieve a de-escalation of the situation is through urgently establishing joint monitoring over the Roki tunnel, increasing the number of OSCE military monitoring officers in the Tskhinvali region, immediately modifying the existing format of negotiations, launching a direct dialogue between the parties to the conflict and unconditionally returning refugees and internally displaced persons to

their original places of residence. The recent developments have shown clearly that the position of the Russian Federation will be the decisive factor in how the process will unfold in the Tskhinvali region.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia expresses hope that the Russian Federation will find the wisdom not to derail the negotiations scheduled for today, and to plot a peaceful course for the thus-far explosive process taking place in the region.

Tbilisi, 7 August 2008

http://www.mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=1