



Security Council

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Letter dated 27 October 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

At the outset, I would like to extend our gratitude to the Romanian Presidency of the Council for the month of October 2005. This is the last presidency for you in this two-year membership of the Council and we are wholeheartedly thankful for your cooperation and active participation in the work, particularly in the framework of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General for Georgia.

As is mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia (S/2005/657), dated 19 October 2005, since last summer some positive developments have taken place in the conflict-resolution process in that region. The fourth meeting on security guarantees was convened on 4 August — the first such meeting since May 2004. At that meeting, the parties agreed on further cooperation on the issues of the railroad survey and the return of refugees and internally displaced persons.

Unfortunately, the positive developments are pretty much exhausted by the above-mentioned meeting. That positive momentum was marred by a large-scale Abkhaz military exercise — the largest in the post-war period. Most alarmingly, those exercises were held in the zone of responsibility of the Russian peacekeeping force, which, unlike the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), left the events without comment. Moreover, we have no doubt in our mind that financing and equipment for these exercises came from the Russian Federation.

The issue of the human rights sub-office in Gali remains unresolved. Abkhazs are stubbornly refusing to allow its opening and operation. At the same time, the Secretary-General's report indicates a worsening of the situation in the field. And this concerns not only Georgians, but rather general situations, as outlined in the report.

Still unresolved is the issue of the full deployment of the civilian police component of UNOMIG, mandated by the Security Council. And again, the Abkhaz side demonstrates absolute neglect of the resolutions passed by this august body.

Yet another problem, which should be qualified, as a matter of fact, as cultural genocide — the issue of banning instruction in the Georgian language in Gali schools — remains unresolved. Currently, teachers, who dared to instruct in the Georgian language, have been thrown out and the entire school curriculum is being taught in Russian.

It is impossible to avoid commenting on the behaviour of the facilitator — the Russian Federation, especially when several extremely alarming trends take place in Abkhazia, Georgia:

- The Russian Federation continues to maintain illegally its military base in Gudauta, which operates without the consent of Georgia and against international commitments undertaken by Russia;
- Positions in the separatist Governments are filled with people sent directly from public jobs in the Russian Federation, from as far away as Siberia;
- Legal entities of the Russian Federation acquire property and land in the secessionist regions;
- Military personnel of separatists are trained by the Russian military schools, without shying away from openly providing them quotas;
- Russian citizenship is granted to the 80 per cent of current population of those regions, as claimed by their leaders, who also vow to accomplish 100 per cent of such passportization of the residents in just a few months.

In the light of the facts and logic just mentioned, it is inevitable to come across the issue of Russian peacekeepers in Abkhazia, Georgia. Between whom do they stand? Who do they separate? Georgians and Russian citizens? Then we are witnessing not a peacekeeping operation but, again, a trivial military annexation of part of Georgia by Russia, where these military units are securing the borders of annexed territories.

Annexation is nothing more than assertion of effective control through political, economic and military means over the territory of another State, as is the case with Abkhazia and former South Ossetia.

Most cynically, in our case, annexation is carried out against a small and friendly neighbouring country by a permanent member of the Security Council.

Nevertheless, these Russian military forces are still referred to as peacekeepers or “blue helmets”, as the overall conflict-resolution in the region is structured as a United Nations-led peace process.

As a matter of fact, the report indicates that the number of internally displaced persons from Abkhazia has decreased from around 250,000 to little more than 200,000. This decrease happened, mostly because of the natural death of these people. Shall we suggest that this is a positive trend and just wait until they are all gone before the process of return starts?

What sort of “peacekeeping” is the United Nations going to enhance? Whose rights will the Organization protect? Anybody but Georgian refugees and internally displaced persons?

In this regard I have to inform the Security Council of the resolution of the parliament of Georgia, adopted on 11 October 2005, regarding the Russian peacekeepers in Georgia, both in the Tskhinvali region/former South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The resolution calls for them to improve their performance and truly facilitate the peace process and sets a deadline for the reassessment of their functioning, which in the case of Abkhazia is 1 July 2006. The resolution also

envisages that in case of negative reassessment, Georgia will oppose the peacekeeping operation and withdraw from all relevant agreements and bodies.

What this resolution is about, in fact, is that it calls upon the Russian leadership to review its approach. Unfortunately, the response of the Russian Foreign Ministry, calling the resolution of the Parliament of Georgia “provocative” and “counter-productive”, indicates that there is no political will to “defreeze” the conflict-resolution process. It seems that the Russian-led peacekeeping operation has, in fact, exhausted its potential and the only effective way is to have a full-scale international, I would underline — truly international — United Nations-led peacekeeping operation.

The Georgian leadership is firmly committed to a peaceful settlement of the conflict on its territory, weighing ethnic inclusiveness and integration, safeguarding human rights and freedoms. Despite all of the above-mentioned we still believe that there is no military solution — on the contrary, we are confident that it is counterproductive. Our policy of proactive engagement has long-term goals to get Abkhaz society out of isolation, to expose them to democratic values and beliefs, recognizing fundamental human rights of internally displaced persons and refugees, first of all the right to return to their homes, regardless of their ethnicity, to establish an environment of trust and mutual respect. This is the only way to resolve the conflict — cooperative efforts of the Government and civil society to create a favourable environment through the promotion of the rule of law, human rights, legitimacy through participation and the creation of an environment of peace and security.

Just yesterday the Georgian Prime Minister aired a detailed plan of conflict resolution in another separatist region of Georgia — Tskhinvali region/former South Ossetia. We will be happy if the Ossetian side and, especially, their patrons in Russia finally realize and understand that keeping conflicts in a “frozen” state is destructive and start negotiations without preconditions.

I would like to reiterate my Government’s invitation extended to the Security Council to visit Georgia. We firmly believe that such a visit will contribute immensely to the revitalization of the peace process and pave the way for new positive development in the conflict-ravaged region.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Revaz **Adamia**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative