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Situation in Georgia

Greens/EFA motion for a resolution

Tabled by Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Monica Frassoni, Marie Anne Isler Béguin, Cem Özdemir, Angelika Beer, Raül Romeva i Rueda and Bart Staes on behalf of the Greens/EFA Group

The European Parliament,

¶ having regard to its previous resolutions on country-regioncountry-regionGeorgia, in particular those of 29 November 2007 and 5 June 2008,

¶ having regard to its resolution of 17 January 2008 on a more effective EU policy for the South Caucasus and its resolution of 15 November 2007 on strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy,

¶ having regard to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part, which entered into force on 1 July 1999,

¶ having regard to the ENP Action Plan endorsed by the EU-Georgia Cooperation Council on 14 November 2006,

¶ having regard to the UNSC resolution of 15 April 2008 that supports the territorial integrity of Georgia and extends the mandate of UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) until 15 October 2008,

¶ having regard to the conclusions of the extraordinary meeting of the General Affairs and External Relations Council held in Brussels on 13 August 2008,

¶ having regard to the conclusions of the extraordinary meeting of the European Council held in country-regioncountry-regionBrussels on 1 September 2008,

¶ having regard to Rule 103(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas, after several weeks of increased tension and skirmishing between the parties and provocations by the South Ossetian separatist forces involving bomb attacks, deadly clashes, shootouts and shellings which caused the deaths of many civilians and left many more injured, during the night of 7 and 8 August 2008 the Georgian army launched a surprise artillery attack on Tskhinvali followed by a ground operation using both tanks and soldiers aimed at regaining control over South Ossetia,

B. whereas Russia immediately poured its troops through the Roki tunnel into Georgia, retaking control of

the Tskhinvali region and then invading and occupying large portions of Georgian territory, deliberately targeting and destroying strategic civilian infrastructure,

C. whereas Georgian villages in South Ossetia and in the areas close to the administrative line have been heavily damaged, looted and intentionally burned by Ossetian irregulars, with Russian troops doing little to stop these actions,

D. whereas on 12 August 2008 the Georgian and Russian authorities signed the ceasefire agreement brokered by the EU Presidency based on the following six principles: (1) an undertaking not to resort to force, (2) a definitive end to hostilities, (3) free access for humanitarian aid, (4) withdrawal by the Georgian military forces to their usual bases, (5) withdrawal by the Russian military forces to the lines held prior to the outbreak of hostilities; pending agreement on an international mechanism, Russian peace-keeping forces will implement additional security measures, (6) opening of international talks on the security and stability arrangements in Abkhazia and South Ossetia,

E. whereas the full implementation of all these principles must be duly monitored by an adequately-staffed OSCE mission,

F. whereas, at their meeting of 19 August 2008, the NATO Foreign Ministers agreed to support Georgia in a number of areas and determined that relations with Russia cannot continue on the basis of business as usual; whereas Russia reacted to this by deciding to halt its cooperation with NATO,

G. whereas about 158 000 people were uprooted by the crisis and forced to leave their homes and must now be assisted in their efforts to return; whereas the presence of cluster munitions, unexploded ordnance and landmines, as well as the Russian warnings and the lack of cooperation, make any such return unsafe,

H. whereas country-regionRussia country-region has claimed that country-regionGeorgia committed genocide in Tskhinvali; whereas the Georgians for their part have accused the Russians and Ossetians of a calculated campaign of ethnic cleansing,

I. whereas international human rights researchers and military analysts have documented the use by Russian troops of cluster munitions in Georgia, which has left thousands of items of unexploded ordnance in the conflict areas; whereas according to Human Rights Watch Georgia has also admitted to the use of cluster bombs in South Ossetia near the Roki tunnel,

J. whereas on 26 August 2008 President Medvedev signed decrees on the recognition by the Russian Federation of the independence of both South Ossetia and Abkhazia after the Federation Council and the Duma had unanimously adopted a resolution calling on him to do so; whereas in April 2008 the then Russian President Vladimir Putin had already instructed Russian ministries and other state agencies to establish official ties with counterpart agencies in the Georgian breakaway republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia,

K. whereas the Russian Federation is about to sign a military agreement with South Ossetia that will allow Russia to set up a military base in this breakaway province; whereas according to diplomatic sources Russia is also planning to establish two military bases in Abkhazia,

L. whereas last week the Georgian Government broke off diplomatic relations with country-regionRussia country-region and the country-regionRussian Federation responded by doing the same,

M. whereas country-regionGeorgia has close links to the EU as an active partner in the European Neighbourhood Policy; whereas the EU and the country-regioncountry-regionRussian Federation have developed a strategic partnership over the years,

N. whereas the deep economic integration and interdependence between the EU and Russia is irreversible; whereas the EU and Russia share a responsibility for global stability and security, and whereas enhanced cooperation and good-neighbourly relations are of particular importance for the stability and security of Europe,

O. whereas the Member States' severe dependence on Russian oil and gas often prevents the EU from speaking with one voice and from taking a more coherent and assertive approach vis-à-vis that country with a view to defending and promoting the values on which the EU is founded, i.e. democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law,

P. whereas every effort should be made by the EU to help Georgia keep up the pace of reform and develop a fully functioning democracy; whereas the ENP Action Plan provides Georgia with the opportunity to establish closer relations with the EU and embrace and share its founding values,

1. Welcomes the conclusions of the extraordinary meeting of the European Council held in country-regioncountry-regionBrussels on 1 September 2008;
2. Takes the view that there can be no military solution to the conflicts in the Caucasus and deplores the actions of all those who resorted to force and violence in order to change the situation on the ground in country-regionSouth Ossetia and Abkhazia;
3. Criticises strongly, in that connection, the attack by Georgian forces on the Tskhinvali region and strongly condemns the Russian military response, which was disproportionate and incompatible with the international peace-keeping mandate that the Russian troops were to carry out in the region;
4. Criticises the EU's involvement in the South Caucasus in recent years, which has come late and has had the appearance of a silent acceptance of the status quo of the frozen conflicts; welcomes, in this regard, the constant efforts by the EU Presidency to put an end to the fighting and solve the present crisis; supports the ceasefire agreement brokered between Georgia and Russia, but stresses that this must be considered as the starting point for a genuine peace process aimed at reaching a lasting and comprehensive settlement;
5. Calls on all the parties to honour and fully implement the six principles included in the ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008; deplores, in this regard, the incomplete implementation of the agreement by the Russian forces and calls for the full withdrawal of Russian troops from those parts of Georgian territory outside the security zones ringing South Ossetia and Abkhazia and, in particular, from the area of Poti and the area between Gori and South Ossetia;
6. Welcomes the OSCE decision of 19 August 2008 to increase for six months by between 20 and up to 100 the number of Military Monitoring Officers in order to contribute to the full implementation of the six principles of the ceasefire agreement, but considers it insufficient to deal with the present situation and calls for the adequate staffing of the mission; urges the EU Member States to actively contribute to the setting-up of the mission; calls on the OSCE to start an independent and impartial investigation into the events that took place during the crisis;
7. Reaffirms its support for the independence and the territorial integrity of Georgia and calls on the Russian authorities to fully respect the sovereignty of that country within its internationally recognised borders; rejects, in this regard, the presidential decrees on the recognition by Russia of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and warns President Medvedev of the consequences that such an action could have in the whole region and within the Russian Federation itself; points out that any decision on the final status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia must be conditional on compliance with the basic principles of international law, with regard, in particular, to the return of refugees and respect for their property and guarantees of and respect for minority rights;

8. Takes the view that the present peace-keeping format must be radically revised, since the Russian forces have forfeited their role as neutral and impartial peace-keepers; calls, in this regard, on the Russian Federation not to further hinder a UN Security Council resolution aimed at better defining the principles and the terms of the ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 and to accept the eventual deployment of a UN-mandated international peace-keeping force in the disputed areas and in the areas affected by the war;

9. Reiterates its call for deeper European involvement in the frozen conflicts in order to bring the peace processes forward; calls on the Council and the Commission to prepare and launch an ESDP mission for Georgia with a strong civilian component aimed at protecting civilians and stabilising the situation, supporting Georgian democratic institutions, speeding up the pace of reform, coordinating reconstruction projects in the areas affected by the war and rebuilding confidence between the parties;

10. Welcomes the European Commission's decision of 22 August 2008 to provide an additional 75 million in humanitarian aid for vulnerable people affected by the conflict between Georgia and the Russian Federation; calls on the Commission to draw on the experience of the European Agency for Reconstruction in the Western Balkans and start an urgent reconstruction programme for all the areas affected by the conflict in order to facilitate the return of refugees and displaced persons; calls on the Commission to ensure that European aid reaches all the population of Georgia, including the people living in South Ossetia, in order to help them cope with the grave humanitarian situation;

11. Deplores the fact that Russian military checkpoints north of Gori are posing an obstacle to humanitarian relief efforts and are having an impact on the economy in the region, with regard, in particular, to trade with Armenia, and calls on all the parties to guarantee safe and unrestricted passage for humanitarian aid and to allow journalists and independent observers free access;

12. Urges Georgia, which ratified the Rome Statute of the ICC, and the Russian authorities to lend support to and fully cooperate with the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court as regards its investigation into the tragic events and the attacks against civilians which took place during the conflict in order to determine responsibility and bring those responsible to justice;

13. Calls on the Russian and the Georgian authorities to provide full information concerning the areas where their armies dropped cluster bombs so that an immediate start can be made on de-mining operations and in order to prevent further casualties among innocent civilians and facilitate the safe return of displaced persons;

14. Points out that the conflict has caused serious damage to the natural ecosystem in Georgia; deplores the forest fires caused by the Russian Air Force in the Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park and condemns the refusal by the Russian military command to open air corridors so that the fires in these mountainous areas could be put out;

15. Urges the Council to appoint a high-profile special envoy for Georgia in order to monitor closely the development of the crisis and the implementation of the ceasefire agreement, facilitate the resumption of dialogue between the parties, defuse tension and restore mutual confidence;

16. Urges the Member States to encourage the appointment by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office of a special representative to monitor and report on compliance with international humanitarian law;

17. Calls on the Council to convene under the aegis of the United Nations an international conference involving all the parties concerned to discuss and define a standard procedure for bringing about a comprehensive and lasting solution to all the frozen conflicts in the Caucasus and in Moldova;

18. Expresses its deep concern at the deterioration in relations between the EU and Russia during the

ongoing crisis and calls on all the parties to act responsibly and make every effort to prevent the outbreak of a new Cold War; takes the view that there is no alternative to a frank and sincere dialogue and cooperation in the common neighbourhood on the basis of shared common values; stresses, nevertheless, that should the Russian authorities not abide by the commitments entered into on 12 August 2008 the current partnership with Russia must be radically revised; points out, in this regard, that the continuation of the ongoing negotiations on the new EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement must be linked to compliance with and implementation by Russia of all the points of the ceasefire agreement;

19. Urges the EU Member States to take the initiative and raise in the Council of Europe the issue of Russia's compliance with the ceasefire agreement with a view to the suspension of Russia's membership of that body should the agreement not be fully implemented;

20. Urges the Commission and the Member States to start negotiations on the EU-Georgia readmission and visa-facilitation agreements as soon as possible, in order to ensure that citizens of Georgia are not disadvantaged compared to those holding Russian passports in the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia;

21. Calls for the development of a privileged partnership with both country-region Georgia country-region and country-region Ukraine;

22. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the country-region Member States, the President and Parliament of Georgia, the United Nations, the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the President and Parliament of the country-region Russian Federation.

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