

Dear Mr President

Secretary General

Dear Colleagues

I would like to start by expressing my gratitude for inviting me to address this important institutional pillar of the Council of Europe. The Georgian authorities remain committed to the irreversible wish of the citizens of Georgia to build and strengthen a truly democratic state, based on common European values and principles. This is in this context we see the perspectives of further close co-operation with the Congress. Especially, keeping in mind the results we have already achieved benefiting from this co-operation.

In August, Europe faced an unprecedented challenge when one State has invaded and occupied significant part of its neighbouring, fellow Council of Europe member state. No doubts that the immediate reaction from the European states and institutions, including the Council of Europe, was of particular significance to stop Russian military action. Indeed, I want to once again thank President Mildon for his personal involvement, timely visit to the conflict zone and his clear statements reflecting the position of regional and local authorities of Europe.

Because of time constraints, I would not go deep into details of what happened in August. I would limit myself by stating that the conflict did not start in August and all the Russian actions were pre-meditated and planned well in advance.



What I would also add is that the military action of the Georgian forces into the Tskhinvali region was the only possible reaction that the democratically elected authorities, responsible government should have had:

- when confronted with the undisputed facts that its territory is being invaded by hundreds of tanks and thousands of regular army units and mercenaries crossing the borders of the sovereign state, and
- when its citizens are killed on their own land either by separatist gangs' raids or heavy shelling of populated areas from the artillery located within the sites controlled by the so called Russian peacekeepers.

Any other action or failure to act in order to repel or at least delay the Russian invasion into the internationally recognised sovereign territory would mean that the Georgian authorities do not care or unable to care about the life and security of their own citizens. This would amount to more IDPs in Georgia, while Russia would preserve so called peacekeeping role.

Let us remember - South Ossetia and Abkhazia are not some kind of no-mans-land areas. These are internationally recognised parts of Georgia. We fought against foreign invasion and we fought on our soil. Georgians never stepped beyond the Georgian territory.



Naturally, apart of these undisputed facts there are questions that need to be answered. To this end we have created a temporary Parliamentary Commission which is investigating the conduct of the August war. This Commission, headed by the opposition MP is scrutinising everyone who may shed a light to the pending questions. The highest officials, including the Head of State himself, myself are among those questioned live on national television. This is an important component of the democratic process in a democratic state.

Also in contrast with the regime in Moscow, we have already in August requested the conduct of an independent international inquiry that has been taken on board by the European Union. Russia has yet to accede to such terms of inquiry.

The large-scale military confrontations are over thanks to the 12 August ceasefire agreement brokered by the French EU Presidency. However this agreement is not yet fully respected by the Russian side. The parts of the Georgian territory even outside the conflict zones are still occupied by the Russian occupational forces, ethnic cleansing of the Georgian population within the conflict zones is still ongoing and the EU monitors are unable to effectively conduct their activities.

The August war confirmed that all the steps of the Moscow regime were directed to the ultimate goal of unilateral recognition of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia/Tskhinvali region.



Their plan over these years, included constant fueling of provocations instead of peacekeeping, blocking and vetoing all the peace proposals tabled by the Georgian side, including those envisaging highest possible autonomies for Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region, as well as attempts to legalise illegally established direct contacts with the separatist regimes.

This illegal recognition of the regions of a sovereign country is an attempt to legalise the ethnic cleansing of the Georgians that took place already in early 90ies as confirmed by the consecutive Resolutions of OSCE Ministerials. It is a clear violation of the principles of international law and the requirements of the Statute of the Council of Europe. President Mildon deplored the fact of unilateral recognition act taken by the Russian Federation and rightly so, emphasised its incompatibility with the European Charter of Local Self-Government. The people and authorities of Georgia, as well as the community of democratic states will never agree to accept this way of changing borders in Europe.

Mr Chairman,

The only way to prevent similar events in the future is the further democratisation of the "State continuator" of the Soviet Union. The democratic state does not invade another democracy. If no adequate response is found, if democratic principles are not followed by the central and local authorities of Russia, than in the future we may well witness other "passportisation campaigns" or "peace enforcement" operations inside or outside Russia, which will bring more ethnically cleansed territories, mass human casualties, destroyed, bombarded and marauded populated areas, cyber-attacks, damaged infrastructure, burned natural and cultural heritage of Europe...





We do not want to isolate Russia. We all hope that Russia will one day soon decide to join the international community as a full, cooperative partner—this would be the greatest contribution to Georgia's stability.

Coming to an end, I should state that the will of the Georgian people to build the democratic state based on European values and aspirations to further integrate into the European and Euro-Atlantic institutions remain unchanged. This is why, we are grateful that the draft Resolution of the Congress once again confirms the readiness from the Council of Europe to continue rendering its valuable support to my country.

I thank you Mr Chairman.

