

Press Release

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The use of force must be categorically excluded from the solution of frozen conflicts, says PACE President following his visit to Georgia

Strasbourg, 07.07.2007 – The solution of frozen conflicts is crucial for the future development of the South Caucasus region - but this solution must be achieved uniquely through peaceful means, declared the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, René van der Linden, at the end of his visit to Georgia from 5-7 July 2007.

During his visit, the PACE President met the President of Georgia, parliamentarians, the Prime Minister, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and NGO representatives. On 7 July, he also visited South Ossetia.

Underlining the Assembly's position that the solution to the conflicts in Georgia must respect the principle of territorial integrity, Mr van der Linden called on all parties to engage in a serious political dialogue in order to achieve progress. The first pre-condition for the success of this dialogue is to stop all military confrontations and provocations and to calm current tensions, he added.

During his meetings, the PACE President expressed his appreciation for the progress achieved on democratic reforms in Georgia and stressed that Council of Europe expertise and instruments have been extremely useful in this process. The Assembly's monitoring procedure is providing precious assistance and guidance to the Georgian authorities in their efforts to achieve further progress on their obligations and commitments to the Council of Europe, in particular with regard to checks and balances in the political system, election legislation, independence of the media and the justice system, and the fight against corruption.

The PACE President will continue his tour of the South Caucasus region with a visit to Azerbaijan on 8-9 July 2007.

The Parliamentary Assembly brings together 318 members from the national parliaments of the 47 member states.

President: René van der Linden (Netherlands, EPP/CD); Secretary General of the Assembly: Mateo Sorinas.

Political Groups: SOC (Socialist Group); EPP/CD (Group of the European People's Party); ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe); EDG (European Democratic Group); UEL (Group of the Unified European Left).