

Press Release

Council of Europe Press Division

Ref: 291a08

Tel: +33 (0)3 88 41 25 60

Fax: +33 (0)3 88 41 39 11

pressunit@coe.int

internet: www.coe.int/press



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Conflicts in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia

Statement by Ján Kubiš, Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

Strasbourg, 24.04.2008 – Seriously concerned by recent developments in the Georgian conflict areas, Ján Kubiš, Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, reiterates his firm commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally-recognised borders as reaffirmed in UNSC resolution 1808 of 15 April 2008. He welcomes repeated statements by the Russian authorities and the State Duma of the Russian Federation confirming their respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders. He also takes note of the assurances given by the Russian Federation that it will continue to strictly abide by the rules of international law prohibiting the supply of weapons to the conflict zones.

The Chairman of the Committee of Ministers also takes note of the approval by the President of the Russian Federation of a package of measures for the normalisation of relations with Georgia that will further contribute to the economic and social development of the region, the free movement of people and co-operation between nations.

The Chairman of the Committee of Ministers affirms his continued support for international efforts towards reaching a peaceful settlement to the protracted conflicts on the territory of Georgia and welcomes the fact that the Georgian President has proposed new peace initiatives for the settlement of these conflicts. In this context, the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers considers that the recent decision of the Russian Federation, announced by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 16 April 2008, to establish official ties with institutions of the *de facto* authorities in South Ossetia and Abkhazia without the consent of the Government of Georgia risks further increasing tensions in the conflict zones and undermines the international peace efforts in which the Russian Federation is also participating. He calls on the Russian Federation to reconsider and not to implement its decision and on all parties to refrain from any action that may lead to an escalation of tensions.

The Chairman of the Committee of Ministers supports the statement made yesterday by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on the same matter.

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