

Wednesday 3 September 2008

Georgia

P6_TA(2008)0396

European Parliament resolution of 3 September 2008 on the situation in Georgia

(2009/C 295 E/08)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Georgia and, in particular, its resolution of 26 October 2006 on the situation in South Ossetia ⁽¹⁾ and its resolutions of 29 November 2007 ⁽²⁾ and 5 June 2008 ⁽³⁾ on the situation in Georgia,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 November 2007 on strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) ⁽⁴⁾ and its resolutions of 17 January 2008 on a more effective EU policy for the South Caucasus ⁽⁵⁾ and on a Black Sea Regional Policy Approach ⁽⁶⁾,
- having regard to the ENP Action Plan adopted with Georgia, which includes a commitment to cooperation for the settlement of Georgia's internal conflicts,
- having regard to Council Joint Action 2008/450/CFSP of 16 June 2008 regarding a further contribution of the European Union to the conflict settlement process in Georgia/South Ossetia ⁽⁷⁾, and other previous Council joint actions on the same subject,
- having regard to its previous resolutions on EU-Russia relations, particularly its resolution of 19 June 2008 on the EU-Russia Summit of 26-27 June 2008 in Khanty-Mansiysk ⁽⁸⁾,
- having regard to the conclusions of the extraordinary meeting of the General Affairs and External Relations Council on the situation in Georgia of 13 August 2008,
- having regard to the conclusions of the extraordinary meeting of the European Council ⁽⁹⁾ held in Brussels on 1 September 2008,
- having regard to UN Security Council Resolutions S/RES/1781 (2007) and S/RES/1808 (2008), which both support the territorial integrity of Georgia and the last of which extends the mandate of the UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) until 15 October 2008,
- having regard to Decision No 861 of the Permanent Council of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) of 19 August 2008 increasing the number of military monitoring officers in the OSCE mission to Georgia,
- having regard to the NATO Bucharest Summit Declaration of 3 April 2008 and to the outcome of the NATO Council meeting of 19 August 2008,
- having regard to Rule 103(4) of its Rules of Procedure,

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 313 E, 20.12.2006, p. 429.

⁽²⁾ Texts Adopted, P6_TA(2007)0572.

⁽³⁾ Texts Adopted, P6_TA(2008)0253.

⁽⁴⁾ Texts Adopted, P6_TA(2007)0538.

⁽⁵⁾ Texts Adopted, P6_TA(2008)0016.

⁽⁶⁾ Texts Adopted, P6_TA(2008)0017.

⁽⁷⁾ OJ L 157, 17.6.2008, p. 110.

⁽⁸⁾ Texts Adopted, P6_TA(2008)0309.

⁽⁹⁾ Council of the European Union, document 12594/08.

Wednesday 3 September 2008

- A. whereas the EU remains committed to supporting the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders,
- B. whereas the distribution of Russian passports to citizens in South Ossetia and support for the separatist movement, together with increased military activity by separatists against villages with Georgian populations, have increased the tensions in South Ossetia, combined with large-scale Russian military manoeuvres close to the border with Georgia during July 2008,
- C. 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, shoot-outs and shellings which caused the deaths of many civilians and left many more injured, during the night of 7/8 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,
- D. whereas Russia responded immediately, after a long-term military build-up, with a massive counter-attack, sending in tanks and ground troops, bombing several locations in Georgia, including the town of Gori, and blocking Georgian Black Sea ports,
- E. 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,
- F. whereas the infrastructure of Georgia has been heavily damaged by the Russian military actions and whereas humanitarian aid is needed,
- G. 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 Georgia has also admitted to the use of cluster bombs in South Ossetia near the Roki tunnel,
- H. whereas on 12 August 2008 the Presidents of Georgia and Russia committed themselves to an agreement on the basis of the mediation efforts carried out by the EU providing for an immediate ceasefire, the withdrawal of Georgian and Russian forces to their positions prior to 7 August 2008 and the opening of international talks on an international mechanism to be set up rapidly in order to prepare for a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict,
- I. whereas on 19 August 2008 NATO suspended regular top-level ties with Russia, saying that Russia's military action had been 'disproportionate' and 'inconsistent with its peacekeeping role in parts of Georgia' and that 'business as usual' could not continue while Russian troops remained in Georgia,
- J. whereas on 22 August 2008 Russia withdrew tanks, artillery and hundreds of troops from their most advanced positions in Georgia, but still controls access to the port city of Poti, south of Abkhazia, and the Russian Government announced that it would keep troops in a security zone around South Ossetia, establishing eight checkpoints at which Russian troops will be deployed,
- K. whereas on 25 August 2008 Russia's upper house of parliament adopted a resolution asking the President to recognise the independence of Georgia's breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which was followed on 26 August 2008 by President Dmitry Medvedev's decision that Russia would formally recognise the two regions as independent states,
- L. whereas this conflict has far-reaching implications for regional stability and security, going well beyond the direct relationship between all sides in the conflict, with possible repercussions for the EU-Russia relationship, the ENP, the Black Sea region and beyond,

Wednesday 3 September 2008

- M. whereas the EU must maintain full political unity in response to the crisis in Georgia and must speak with one voice, in particular in its relations with Russia; whereas the process towards a peaceful and stable solution to the conflicts in Georgia and in the Caucasus will demand a comprehensive revision of the ENP and a new engagement with the whole region, in cooperation with all European and international organisations, notably the OSCE,
- N. whereas last week the Georgian Government broke off diplomatic relations with Russia and the Russian Federation responded by doing the same,
1. Takes the view that there cannot be a military solution to the conflicts in the Caucasus and expresses its firm condemnation of all those who resorted to force and violence in order to change the situation in the Georgian breakaway territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia;
 2. Calls on Russia to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia and the inviolability of its internationally recognised borders, and therefore strongly condemns the recognition by the Russian Federation of the independence of the breakaway Georgian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as contrary to international law;
 3. 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, including the 1975 Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Final Act), with regard, in particular, to the return of refugees and respect for their property and guarantees of, and respect for, minority rights;
 4. Condemns the unacceptable and disproportionate military action by Russia and its deep incursion into Georgia, which violates international law; underlines that there is no legitimate reason for Russia to invade Georgia, to occupy parts of it and to threaten to override the government of a democratic country;
 5. Deplores the loss of life and human suffering caused by the use of indiscriminate force by all parties engaged in the conflict;
 6. Expresses deep concern at the effect of Russian mines on the social and economic activity of Georgia, in particular with regard to the blowing-up of a railway bridge near Kaspi on the main rail link from Tbilisi to Poti on 16 August 2008 and the explosion caused near Gori on 24 August 2008 to the fuel train carrying crude oil from Kazakhstan for export through Poti; underlines that both actions violated the ceasefire commitment;
 7. Reiterates its firm belief in the principle that no third country has a veto over the sovereign decision of another country to join any international organisation or alliance or the right to destabilise a democratically elected government;
 8. Stresses that the partnership between Europe and Russia must be based on respect for the fundamental rules of European cooperation, upheld not just in words but in action;
 9. Praises the EU Presidency for the efficiency and speed with which it has reacted to this conflict and the unity shown by the Member States in mediating between the two sides, enabling them to sign a ceasefire peace plan; welcomes in this regard the conclusions of the abovementioned extraordinary meeting of the European Council;
 10. Strongly urges Russia to honour all its commitments under the ceasefire agreement reached and signed through the diplomatic efforts of the EU, beginning with the complete and immediate withdrawal of its troops from Georgia proper and the reduction of its military presence in South Ossetia and Abkhazia to the Russian force deployed as peacekeepers in the two provinces before the conflict erupted; condemns the extensive looting perpetrated by the Russian invasion forces and accompanying mercenaries;
 11. Demands that an independent international investigation be carried out as a matter of urgency in order to establish the facts and bring greater clarity to certain allegations;

Wednesday 3 September 2008

12. Urges Georgia, which ratified the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), and the Russian authorities to lend support to and fully cooperate with the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC 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 Georgian authorities to provide full information concerning the areas where their armed forces 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. Calls on the EU and NATO and its members to use, on the basis of a common position, all possibilities to persuade the Russian Government to abide by international law, which is the necessary condition for playing a responsible role in the international community; reminds Russia of its responsibility as a UN veto power for a global order of peace;
15. Calls on the Council and the Commission to review their policy towards Russia should Russia not fulfil its commitments under the ceasefire agreement; supports in consequence the decision of the European Council to postpone the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement negotiations until the withdrawal of the Russian troops to their positions prior to 7 August 2008;
16. Calls on the Commission to propose visa facilitation and readmission agreements with Georgia at least equivalent to those for Russia;
17. Calls on the Member States to review the issuing of visas for economic activities based in South Ossetia and Abkhazia;
18. Strongly condemns the forced resettlement of Georgians from South Ossetia and Abkhazia and calls on the de facto South Ossetian and Abkhazian authorities to guarantee the safe return of the displaced civilian population, in line with international humanitarian law;
19. Welcomes the initiatives taken by the OSCE to increase the number of unarmed observers; calls for a further strengthening of the OSCE Georgia Mission, with full freedom of movement throughout the country, and encourages the EU Member States to make a contribution to these efforts;
20. Calls for a robust contribution by the EU to the planned international mechanism for the resolution of the conflict and therefore welcomes the decision of the European Council to deploy an ESDP (European Security and Defence Policy) monitoring mission to complement the UN and OSCE missions and to ask for a UN or OSCE mandate for an ESDP peace mission;
21. Welcomes the EU's active and continued support for all international efforts to find a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict, in particular the Council's commitment to supporting all UN, OSCE and other efforts to settle the conflict; welcomes in particular the decision to appoint an EU Special Representative for the crisis in Georgia;
22. Welcomes the Commission's EUR 6 million fast-track humanitarian aid package for civilians, which must be bolstered by further funds on the basis of a needs assessment on the ground; notes the urgent need for reconstruction aid in the aftermath of the conflict;
23. Welcomes the Council's decision to convene an international donors' conference for the reconstruction of Georgia, and urges the Council and the Commission to examine the possibility of a major EU plan to provide financial support for the rebuilding of the affected areas of Georgia and to establish a stronger EU presence in the country and throughout the region;
24. Calls on all parties to the conflict to allow full and unfettered access for humanitarian assistance to victims, including refugees and internally displaced persons;

Wednesday 3 September 2008

25. Takes the view that the search for solutions to the conflict in Georgia, along with the other unresolved conflicts in the South Caucasus, will benefit from increased internationalisation of conflict resolution mechanisms; proposes therefore that the EU convene a 'Trans-Caucasian Conference for Peace' as a key element of this process; considers that such a conference should discuss international guarantees concerning full respect for civil and political rights and the promotion of democracy through the international rule of law; stresses that the conference should also provide an opportunity to listen to the voice of the unrepresented or silenced groups of the Caucasian region;
26. Calls on the Council and Commission to develop the ENP further by making it better adapted to the needs of our eastern partners, including a strengthening of EU involvement in the Black Sea region, to take up Parliament's proposal for a European Economic Area Plus or the Swedish-Polish proposal for an Eastern Partnership and to speed up, in relation to Georgia, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova in particular, the establishment of a free trade zone; notes that liberalisation of EU visa policy towards these countries must take account of the fact that Russia has been granted better conditions in this area than they have;
27. Stresses the interrelatedness of a number of problems in the South Caucasus region and the need for a comprehensive solution in the form of a stability pact, with the involvement of the major external actors; underlines the need to enhance cooperation with the neighbouring countries of the Black Sea region by setting up a special institutional and multilateral mechanism such as a Union for the Black Sea, and organising an international security and cooperation conference on the South Caucasus region; asks the Commission, therefore, to make a specific proposal to Parliament and the Council on the setting-up of a multilateral framework for the Black Sea region, including Turkey and Ukraine; considers that neighbouring countries, such as Kazakhstan, should be involved in the interests of the whole region's stability and energy flows;
28. Recalls that at the Bucharest Summit on 3 April 2008 NATO agreed that Georgia would become a member of the Alliance;
29. Stresses the importance of Georgia in improving EU energy security by providing an alternative to the Russian energy transit route; considers it crucial that existing infrastructure such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline be effectively protected, and calls on the Commission to offer Georgia all necessary assistance to this end; expects a strong EU political and budgetary commitment in pursuing the Nabucco pipeline project, recognised as an EU priority project that would cross Georgia's territory and representing the most serious alternative to the projects undertaken in cooperation with Russia which will all potentially increase the economic and political dependence of Member States on Russia;
30. Calls on the Council and the Commission to continue their efforts to adopt the EU common energy policy which, *inter alia*, caters for the need to diversify sources of supply;
31. Takes the view that cooperation in the South Caucasus should not be about mutually exclusive zones of influence between the EU and Russia (so-called 'spheres of interest');
32. Takes the view that the role of the EU in the current crisis underlines the need to strengthen the European foreign, defence and security policy, and believes that the Treaty of Lisbon, including the creation of the position of High Representative, the solidarity clause and the EU Energy Security Policy, represents the right way of doing this;
33. Stresses the need to safeguard stability in the South Caucasus region and calls on the Armenian and Azerbaijani Governments to contribute to achieving this aim, while respecting all their international commitments;
34. Reaffirms the principle that pluralistic and democratic governance, with functioning opposition parties and respect for human and civil rights, constitutes the best guarantee for stability in the entire South Caucasus region;
35. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Member States, the Presidents and Parliaments of Georgia and the Russian Federation, NATO, the OSCE and the Council of Europe.
-