

The Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations was also invited to participate, at his request, in accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations.⁴⁷¹

At the 4061st meeting, the Security Council heard a briefing under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure by Mr. Bernard Kouchner, Special

Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. At the 4086th meeting, the Security Council heard a briefing under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure by Mr. Hédi Annabi, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. The members of the Council made comments and posed questions in connection with the briefings, to which the speakers responded.

⁴⁷¹ S/PV.4061 and S/PV.4086.

28. The situation in Georgia

Decision of 12 January 1996 (3618th meeting): resolution 1036 (1996)

On 2 January 1996, pursuant to Security Council resolution 993 (1995), the Secretary-General submitted to the Council a report on all aspects of the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia,¹ and his recommendations regarding the role of the United Nations after the expiry of the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) on 12 January 1996.² In his report, the Secretary-General informed the Council that the Georgian-Abkhaz peace process remained deadlocked and the situation in the UNOMIG area of responsibility remained unsettled and tense. He stated that, despite strenuous efforts by the Russian Federation, in its capacity as facilitator, to draft a protocol acceptable to both parties to the conflict, there had been very little progress. Stressing that the two sides continued to need outside assistance to help them find a lasting solution to their dispute, he recommended that the Security Council extend the mandate of UNOMIG for six months, until 12 July 1996. However, as the situation in Abkhazia as well as the mandate of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) peacekeeping force would be considered at the meeting of the Council of Heads of State of CIS on 19 January 1996, he also expressed the view that it would be appropriate to make the extension of the

mandate of UNOMIG subject to early review by the Security Council if decisions taken at that meeting changed the mandate of the CIS peacekeeping force.

At its 3618th meeting, held on 12 January 1996 in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations, the Security Council included the report of the Secretary-General in its agenda. Following the adoption of the agenda, the President (United Kingdom), with the consent of the Council, invited the representative of Georgia, at his request, to participate in the discussion without the right to vote. The President then drew the attention of the Council to a draft resolution, prepared in the course of the Council's prior consultations.³ The President also drew the attention of the Council to a letter dated 8 January 1996 from the representative of Georgia addressed to the President of the Security Council, reporting the killing of eight civilians in the Abkhazian region allegedly by "Abkhaz boeviks".⁴

At the same meeting, the representative of Georgia stated that the firm position of the Security Council regarding the developments in the troubled region of Georgia had repeatedly thwarted the aspirations of the separatists to divide the country and to put its sovereignty in question. Abkhaz separatists stubbornly continued to intimidate the civilian population through kidnappings, torture and summary executions. He informed the Council that, despite the resolutions of the Security Council calling for the unconditional return of refugees to their homes, only a

¹ For purposes of this *Supplement*, the term "Abkhazia" refers to "Abkhazia, Georgia", without prejudice to issues of status. In other instances, the terminology originally used in official documents has been preserved to the extent possible.

² S/1996/5.

³ S/1996/16.

⁴ S/1996/9.

small group of displaced persons had managed to return to the region of Gali, where they lived under constant threat. He also informed the Council that, on 5 January, "Abkhaz boeviks" had brutally tortured and killed innocent civilians. The representative stressed that, in carrying out that act, the separatists had once again overridden numerous resolutions of the Security Council and ignored the presence of the United Nations observers and CIS peacekeeping forces in the region. He maintained that the Government of Georgia had always been committed to the peaceful resolution of the conflict but, at the same time, numerous breaches of agreements by the Abkhaz side, including violations of the provisions of Security Council resolutions and attempts to ignore, evade and negotiate away their obligations, had brought them to the conclusion that peace had to be enforced. Therefore, he appealed to the Security Council to assist his country by using its capacity to stop further bloodshed and restore peace in Georgia. He expressed his country's hope that the members of the Council and all interested parties would once again seriously consider the situation in Georgia and would take necessary measures to prevent the imminent escalation of the dispute.⁵

The representative of Italy stressed that the activities of UNOMIG should not contribute to an indefinite paralysis of the situation but that UNOMIG needed to continue playing a dynamic role. That role needed to help to restore a climate of security that would finally make it possible to settle the crucial problem of the return of refugees.⁶

The representative of the Russian Federation noted that the draft resolution reaffirmed the dedication of the international community to settling of the conflict in Abkhazia through political dialogue, on the basis of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, and to ensuring the rights of the multinational people of that country. He also maintained that the basic responsibility for ending the crisis, through mutually acceptable compromises, lay with the parties to the conflict themselves. While the situation of the negotiating process remained complex, he informed the Council that his country was actively working to encourage the parties to be flexible in their approaches to a settlement. Finally, he expressed his

delegation's concern over the situation regarding the return of refugees and displaced persons, and stated that the Russian Federation considered it essential that the comprehensive and safe return of refugees be ensured.⁷

The representative of China maintained that the final settlement of the question in Georgia depended, in the final analysis, on Georgians of all ethnic groups. In that connection, the international community could play only a supplementary and promoting role that was based on the political will of the two parties concerned. Therefore, he urged the two parties to take into account the fundamental interests of Georgians of all ethnic groups and to engage in real peace talks to find a proper solution.⁸

Speaking both before and after the vote, several speakers made statements expressing their concern over the lack of progress in the negotiations and the humanitarian situation. They expressed support for the role of UNOMIG and expressed hope that a political settlement to the conflict would be reached. Many delegations stressed that both parties needed to cooperate with UNOMIG in creating a safe environment for the return of refugees and displaced persons. Speakers also stressed that any settlement needed to respect the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia.⁹

At the same meeting, the draft resolution was put to the vote and adopted unanimously as resolution 1036 (1996), which reads:

The Security Council,

Reaffirming all its relevant resolutions, in particular resolution 993 (1995) of 12 May 1995,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General of 2 January 1996,

Reaffirming its commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia,

Stressing the need for the parties to intensify efforts, under the auspices of the United Nations and with the assistance

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-5 (Germany); pp. 5-6 (Republic of Korea); pp. 6-7 (Poland); p. 8 (Guinea-Bissau); pp. 9-10 (Indonesia); pp. 9-10 (Botswana); pp. 11-12 (Honduras); pp. 12-13 (Egypt); pp. 13-14 (United States); pp. 14-15 (France); pp. 15-16 (Chile); and p. 16 (United Kingdom).

⁵ S/PV.3618, pp. 2-3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

of the Russian Federation as facilitator, to achieve an early and comprehensive political settlement of the conflict, including on the political status of Abkhazia, fully respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia,

Noting the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections in Georgia in November 1995, and expressing the hope that these will contribute positively to the achievement of a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia,

Reaffirming the right of all refugees and displaced persons affected by the conflict to return to their homes in secure conditions in accordance with international law and as set out in the Quadripartite Agreement on Voluntary Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons of 4 April 1994,

Deploring the continued obstruction of such return by the Abkhaz authorities,

Deeply concerned over the deterioration in the humanitarian situation, in particular in the Gali region where there is a continued lack of a secure environment,

Deeply concerned also at the rising violence and at the killings being committed in the areas under the control of the Abkhaz side reported in a letter dated 8 January 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council,

Recalling the conclusions of the Budapest summit of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe regarding the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia,

Reaffirming the necessity for the parties to comply strictly with international humanitarian law,

Noting that the Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces signed in Moscow on 14 May 1994 has generally been respected by the parties with the assistance of the collective peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia,

Expressing its satisfaction with the close cooperation and coordination between the Mission and the collective peacekeeping force in the performance of their respective mandates, and commending the contribution both have made to stabilize the situation in the zone of conflict,

Expressing concern about the safety and security of the Mission and Commonwealth of Independent States personnel, and stressing the importance it attaches to their freedom of movement,

Noting that the forthcoming meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States to be held in Moscow on 19 January 1996 will consider the extension of the mandate of the collective peacekeeping force,

1. *Welcomes* the report of the Secretary-General of 2 January 1996;

2. *Expresses its deep concern* at the continued deadlock in the efforts to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia;

3. *Reaffirms its full support* for the efforts of the Secretary-General aimed at achieving a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict, including on the political status of Abkhazia, respecting fully the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, as well as for the efforts that are being undertaken by the Russian Federation in its capacity as facilitator to intensify the search for a peaceful settlement of the conflict, and encourages the Secretary-General to continue his efforts, with the assistance of the Russian Federation as facilitator, and with the support of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, to that end;

4. *Calls upon* the parties, in particular the Abkhaz side, to achieve substantive progress without further delay towards a comprehensive political settlement, and also calls upon them to cooperate fully with the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General with the assistance of the Russian Federation as facilitator;

5. *Demands* that the Abkhaz side accelerate significantly the process of voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons by accepting a timetable on the basis of that proposed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and also demands that it guarantee the safety of spontaneous returnees already in the area and regularize their status in accordance with the Quadripartite Agreement on Voluntary Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons of 4 April 1994;

6. *Calls upon* the Abkhaz side, in that context, to promote, as a first step, the return of refugees and displaced persons to the Gali region in safety and dignity;

7. *Condemns* the ethnic killings and continuing human rights violations committed in Abkhazia, Georgia, and calls upon the Abkhaz side to ensure the safety of all persons in areas under its control;

8. *Calls upon* the parties to improve their cooperation with the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia and the collective peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States in order to provide a secure environment for the return of refugees and displaced persons, and also calls upon them to honour their commitments with regard to the security and freedom of movement of all United Nations and Commonwealth of Independent States personnel and with regard to Mission inspections of heavy-weapon storage sites;

9. *Welcomes* the additional measures implemented by the Mission and the collective peacekeeping force in the Gali region aimed at improving conditions for the safe and orderly return of refugees and displaced persons, and all appropriate efforts in this regard;

10. *Expresses its full support* for the elaboration of a concrete programme for the protection and promotion of human rights in Abkhazia, Georgia, as described in the report of the

Secretary-General of 2 January 1996, and calls upon the Abkhaz authorities to cooperate fully with the efforts to this end;

11. *Decides* to extend the mandate of the Mission for an additional period terminating on 12 July 1996, subject to a review by the Council of the mandate of the Mission in the event of any changes that may be made in the mandate of the collective peacekeeping force;

12. *Reiterates its encouragement* to States to contribute to the voluntary fund in support of the implementation of the Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces signed in Moscow on 14 May 1994 and/or for humanitarian aspects, including demining, as specified by the donors;

13. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to keep the Council regularly informed and to report after three months from the date of the adoption of the present resolution on all aspects of the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, including the operations of the Mission;

14. *Decides* to remain actively seized of the matter.

**Decision of 25 April 1996 (3658th meeting):
statement by the President**

On 15 April 1996, pursuant to paragraph 13 of Security Council resolution 1036 (1996), the Secretary-General submitted to the Council a report on all aspects of the situation in Abkhazia.¹⁰ In his report, the Secretary-General stated that, despite months of vigorous efforts by the Russian Federation, in its capacity as facilitator, neither side had signed the draft protocol on the principal elements of a settlement owing to continued disagreement over the political status of Abkhazia. He stressed that, while the stalemate continued, there could be no significant improvement in the situation of displaced persons and refugees, whose plight was a cause of great concern. He stated that, while it was unlikely that the draft protocol would clearly define the political status of Abkhazia, if the draft protocol was signed, it would serve as a framework for further negotiations and expert discussions. The Secretary-General stated that he saw an important role for the United Nations, especially as both sides, as well as the Russian Federation in its capacity as facilitator, had recently asked his Special Envoy to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the search for a comprehensive settlement.

¹⁰ S/1996/284.

At its 3658th meeting, held on 25 April 1996 in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations, the Security Council included the report of the Secretary-General in its agenda. Following the adoption of the agenda, the President (Chile), with the consent of the Council, invited the representative of Georgia, at his request, to participate in the discussion without the right to vote.

At the same meeting, the President then made the following statement on behalf of the Council:¹¹

The Security Council has considered the interim report of the Secretary-General concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, of 15 April 1996. It has also read with appreciation the letter dated 5 March 1996 from the Government of Georgia and the proposals on the political status of Abkhazia contained therein.

The Council notes with deep concern the continued failure of the parties to achieve a comprehensive political settlement. It also notes the adverse impact that this failure has on the humanitarian situation and economic development in the region. It calls upon the parties, in particular the Abkhaz side, to achieve substantive progress without further delay.

The Council reaffirms its full support for the efforts of the Secretary-General, of his Special Envoy and of the Russian Federation as facilitator, aimed at achieving a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict, including on the political status of Abkhazia, respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia. The Council stresses that the primary responsibility for achieving a comprehensive political settlement rests upon the parties themselves.

The Council welcomes the efforts undertaken by the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States as set out in annex IV to document S/1996/74, in support of such a comprehensive political settlement.

The Council remains deeply concerned at the continued obstruction of the return of the refugees and displaced persons by the Abkhaz authorities, which is totally unacceptable.

The Council expresses its support for the efforts of the Secretary-General to find ways of improving the observance of human rights in the region, as an integral part of the work towards a comprehensive political settlement.

The Council notes the important contribution made by the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia and the collective peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States to the stabilization of the situation in the zone of conflict. The Council recalls its encouragement to Member States to make contributions, in cash or kind, to the voluntary fund in support of the implementation of the Agreement on a Ceasefire and

¹¹ S/PRST/1996/20.

Separation of Forces signed in Moscow on 14 May 1994 and/or for humanitarian aspects, including demining. It welcomes the contributions mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General.

The Council is, however, deeply concerned at the deterioration in security conditions in the Gali region, which has a negative effect on the ability of the Mission to meet its mandated tasks. The Council condemns mine-laying in the Gali region, which has resulted in loss of life, including of a military observer of the Mission. Such mine-laying should cease. The Council calls upon the parties to take all measures in their power to prevent it. The Council stresses that the ability of the international community to assist depends on the full cooperation of the parties, especially the fulfillment of their obligations regarding the safety and freedom of movement of international personnel.

The Council invites the Secretary-General to continue to keep it informed of the situation.

**Decision of 12 July 1996 (3680th meeting):
resolution 1065 (1996)**

On 1 July 1996, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1036 (1996), the Secretary-General submitted to the Council a report on all aspects of the situation in Abkhazia.¹² In his report, the Secretary-General informed the Council that the political process remained at a standstill and that the core issue in the conflict, namely the definition of a political status for Abkhazia acceptable to both sides, remained unresolved. Nor were additional measures by the United Nations to improve conditions in the security and restricted weapons zones likely to prove effective, unless the parties demonstrated the necessary will to cooperate. In the hope that the parties could be persuaded to help reactivate the peace process, he recommended that the Security Council extend the mandate of UNOMIG until 31 January 1997. However, as the mandate of the CIS peacekeeping force would expire on 19 July 1996, the extension of the mandate of UNOMIG needed to be subject to an early review by the Council, if decisions were to be taken to change the mandate of that force.

At its 3680th meeting, held on 12 July 1996 in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations, the Security Council included the report of the Secretary-General in its agenda. Following the adoption of the agenda, the President (France), with the consent of the Council, invited the representatives of

Georgia and Ireland, at their request, to participate in the discussion without the right to vote. The President then drew the attention of the Council to a draft resolution prepared in the course of the Council's prior consultations.¹³ The President also drew the attention of the Council to a letter dated 23 May 1996 from the representative of the Russian Federation addressed to the Secretary-General,¹⁴ transmitting the decision on the presence of the Collective Peacekeeping forces and the declaration on the settlement of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict, adopted at the meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the CIS on 17 May 1996; and a letter dated 8 July 1996 from the representative of Georgia addressed to the President of the Security Council,¹⁵ transmitting a letter of 6 July by the President of Georgia on the situation in Abkhazia.

At the same meeting, the representative of Georgia noted that the peace process was at a standstill and that the Gali region, on which international efforts were focused, was engulfed by lawlessness and chaos. The small number of refugees who had returned to their homes had become hostages in the hands of bandit groups. He stated that things had reached the point where the lives of United Nations military observers were being threatened, not to mention their ability to carry out their mandated tasks. He also stated that the mining of the territory had far-ranging consequences, allowing those who were carrying it out to create conditions in which international observers were deprived of first-hand information and in which the thwarting of the international community was planned and premeditated. He stated that, although the Government of Georgia was well aware that both sides bore responsibility for maintaining peace and stability, a true assessment of the positions of the parties, as reflected in their actions, could not be achieved on the basis of a balanced approach. His Government expressed hope that all possible steps would be taken to expand the participation of the international community in a settlement of the conflict. In his view, it would be useful to send representatives of the Security Council to Georgia to study the situation on the ground. He also expressed the hope that the Council would make use of all means available to

¹² S/1996/507 and Add.1.

¹³ S/1996/544.

¹⁴ S/1996/371.

¹⁵ S/1996/527.

convince the separatists of the hopelessness of their destructive policy.¹⁶

The representative of Germany stressed that, while his country welcomed the valuable and stabilizing role that UNOMIG was playing, the role of the Mission could not be to support a perpetuation of the political status quo without the prospect of a negotiated settlement. If the current political stalemate continued, the Council might be forced to ask itself where a future role for United Nations engagement might be. He also expressed his Government's concern over the deteriorated security situation, which had virtually brought patrolling by UNOMIG to an end. He suggested that, if no improvement was foreseen, there might be reason to take a fresh look at the tasks UNOMIG had been mandated to accomplish.¹⁷

The representative of the Russian Federation stated that it was imperative that there be a speedy settlement of the conflict and the elimination of its consequences. His country was holding active consultations with the Abkhaz leaders, combined with measures to exert strong pressure on the Abkhaz side, in accordance with the decisions of the Council of Heads of State of the CIS of 19 January 1996 in order to give greater flexibility and a constructive nature to the position of Sukhumi.¹⁸ He also stated that another subject of growing concern to his delegation was the ongoing deadlock in the question of the organized return of refugees. His Government expected that a firm demand of the Security Council on the issue would ultimately enjoy a positive reception in Sukhumi. Finally, he concluded that urgent and widespread measures need to be taken to eliminate the widespread danger of mines.¹⁹

Several other speakers called on the parties to make committed efforts towards a political settlement. While delegations welcomed the expressed will of the Government of Georgia to move ahead, they criticized the continued intransigence of the Abkhaz authorities and urged Sukhumi to demonstrate flexibility towards a solution based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia. Members also highlighted the humanitarian situation in the region and the plight of

refugees and displaced persons; the establishment of the human rights office in Sukhumi; and the deteriorating security situation in the Gali region, where continued mine-laying posed a particular threat to UNOMIG, the CIS peacekeeping force and the local population, as well as to the freedom of movement of the United Nations observers. Most speakers also expressed support for the proposal for a programme for the protection and promotion of human rights in Abkhazia, to be carried out by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).²⁰

At the same meeting, the draft resolution was put to the vote and adopted unanimously as resolution 1065 (1996), which reads:

The Security Council,

Reaffirming all its relevant resolutions, in particular resolution 1036 (1996) of 12 January 1996,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General of 1 July 1996,

Noting with deep concern the continued failure by the parties to resolve their differences due to the uncompromising position taken by the Abkhaz side, and underlining the necessity for them to intensify without delay their efforts, under the auspices of the United Nations and with the assistance of the Russian Federation as facilitator, to achieve an early and comprehensive political settlement of the conflict, including on the political status of Abkhazia within the State of Georgia, which fully respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia,

Reaffirming the necessity for the parties strictly to respect human rights, and expressing its support for the efforts of the Secretary-General to find ways to improve their observance as an integral part of the work towards a comprehensive political settlement,

Noting that the Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces signed in Moscow on 14 May 1994 has generally been respected by the parties with the assistance of the collective

¹⁶ S/PV.3680 and Corr.1, pp. 2-4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

¹⁸ Sukhumi was the de facto capital of Abkhazia.

¹⁹ S/PV.3680 and Corr.1, pp. 1-11.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5 (Ireland on behalf of the European Union and associated and aligned countries: Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic, and Slovenia; and Iceland and Norway); pp. 6-7 (Chile), pp. 7-8 (China); pp. 8-9 (United Kingdom); p. 9 (Republic of Korea); pp. 9-10 (Poland); pp. 11-12 (Indonesia); pp. 12-13 (Egypt); pp. 12-14 (Guinea-Bissau); pp. 13-14 (Botswana); p. 14 (Italy); and pp. 14-15 (United States).

peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia,

Commending the contribution the Mission and the collective peacekeeping force have made to stabilize the situation in the zone of conflict, and stressing the importance of continued close cooperation and coordination between them in the performance of their respective mandates,

Deeply concerned at the deterioration of the security conditions in the Gali region and of the safety and security of the local population, of the refugees and displaced persons returning to the region and of the Mission and collective peacekeeping force personnel,

Reminding the parties that the ability of the international community to assist them depends on their political will to resolve the conflict through dialogue and mutual accommodation, as well as their full cooperation with the Mission and the collective peacekeeping force, including the fulfilment of their obligations regarding the safety and freedom of movement of international personnel,

Taking note of the decision taken by the heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States on 17 May 1996,

Noting that the heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States will consider the extension of the mandate of the collective peacekeeping force beyond 19 July 1996,

1. *Welcomes* the report of the Secretary-General of 1 July 1996;

2. *Expresses its deep concern* at the continued deadlock in the efforts to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia;

3. *Reaffirms its commitment* to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, within its internationally recognized borders, and to the necessity of defining the status of Abkhazia in strict accordance with these principles, and underlines the unacceptability of any action by the Abkhaz leadership in contravention of these principles;

4. *Reaffirms its full support* for the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy aimed at achieving a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict, including on the political status of Abkhazia within the State of Georgia, respecting fully the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, as well as for the efforts that are being undertaken by the Russian Federation in its capacity as facilitator to continue to intensify the search for a peaceful settlement of the conflict, and encourages the Secretary-General to intensify his efforts, with the assistance of the Russian Federation as facilitator and with the support of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, to that end;

5. *Calls upon* the parties, in particular the Abkhaz side, to achieve substantive progress without further delay towards a comprehensive political settlement, and also calls upon them to cooperate fully with the efforts undertaken by the

Secretary-General with the assistance of the Russian Federation as facilitator;

6. *Reaffirms* the right of all refugees and displaced persons affected by the conflict to return to their homes in secure conditions in accordance with international law and as set out in the Quadripartite Agreement on Voluntary Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons of 4 April 1994, condemns the continued obstruction of that return by the Abkhaz side, and stresses the unacceptability of any linkage of the return of refugees and displaced persons with the question of the political status of Abkhazia, Georgia;

7. *Demands* that the Abkhaz side accelerate significantly the process of voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons without delay or preconditions, in particular by accepting a timetable on the basis of that proposed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and also demands that it guarantee the safety of spontaneous returnees already in the area and regularize their status in cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner and in accordance with the Quadripartite Agreement, in particular in the Gali region;

8. *Recalls* the conclusions of the Budapest summit of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe regarding the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, and affirms the unacceptability of the demographic changes resulting from the conflict;

9. *Condemns* ethnically motivated killings and other ethnically related acts of violence;

10. *Condemns* the laying of mines in the Gali region, which has already caused several deaths and injuries among the civilian population and the peacekeepers and observers of the international community, and calls upon the parties to take all measures in their power to prevent mine-laying and to cooperate fully with the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia and the collective peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States in order to honour their commitments to ensure the safety and the freedom of movement of all personnel of the United Nations, the collective peacekeeping force and international humanitarian organizations;

11. *Encourages* the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps in response to the threat posed by the laying of mines in order to improve security conditions so as to minimize the danger to Mission personnel and to create conditions for the effective performance of the mandate of the Mission;

12. *Decides* to extend the mandate of the Mission for an additional period terminating on 31 January 1997, subject to a review by the Council of the mandate of the Mission in the event of any changes that may be made in the mandate of the collective peacekeeping force;

13. *Expresses its full support* for the implementation of a concrete programme for the protection and promotion of human rights in Abkhazia, Georgia, and requests the Secretary-General to report to the Council by 15 August 1996 on possible

arrangements for the establishment of a human rights office in Sukhumi;

14. *Reiterates its encouragement* to States to contribute to the voluntary fund in support of the implementation of the Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces signed in Moscow on 14 May 1994 and/or for humanitarian aspects, including demining, as specified by the donors;

15. *Requests* the Secretary-General to consider the means of providing technical and financial assistance aimed at the reconstruction of the economy of Abkhazia, Georgia, following the successful outcome of the political negotiations;

16. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to continue to keep the Council regularly informed and to report after three months from the date of the adoption of the present resolution on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, including the operations of the Mission;

17. *Decides* to remain actively seized of the matter.

Speaking after the vote, the representative of France stressed that political negotiations had to be urgently resumed and the obstacle to the return of refugees and displaced persons removed. In that respect, the development of the situation in the Gali region would test the seriousness of the Abkhaz representatives. Continued refusal to cooperate on the issue could only lead the international community to condemn in the harshest terms what would be tantamount to a deliberate policy of "ethnic cleansing".²¹

Decision of 22 October 1996 (3707th meeting): resolution 1077 (1996) and statement by the President

On 9 August 1996, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1065 (1996), the Secretary-General submitted to the Council a report on possible arrangements for the establishment of a human rights office in Sukhumi in cooperation with the OSCE.²²

On 10 October 1996, pursuant to paragraph 16 of Security Council resolution 1065 (1996), the Secretary-General submitted to the Council a report on the situation in Abkhazia and the operations of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia.²³ In his report, the Secretary-General stated that, despite the fact that UNOMIG had had to limit its patrolling of the Gali

sector owing to the continued mine threat, the Mission had been able to implement some of its mandated tasks in the region. He informed the Council that the peace process continued to be stalled and there had been no progress on the question of the return of refugees and displaced persons to Abkhazia. He had, therefore, asked his Special Envoy to visit the region from 8 to 10 October 1996 in order to assess the situation with representatives of both sides and with the Russian Federation. Based on his assessment of the situation, the Secretary-General would consider what steps could be taken by the United Nations to reinvigorate the peace process.

At its 3707th meeting, held on 22 October 1996 in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations, the Security Council included the reports of the Secretary-General in its agenda. Following the adoption of the agenda, the President (Honduras), with the consent of the Council, invited the representative of Georgia, at his request, to participate in the discussion without the right to vote.

The President then drew the attention of the Council to a draft resolution submitted by France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States.²⁴

Speaking before the vote, the representative of China stated that, in accordance with the agreement reached by the two parties in Georgia, OSCE and OHCHR would set up a human rights office in Abkhazia. He noted that, in order to ensure its efficiency and security, the Secretary-General had recommended that UNOMIG provide appropriate support facilities. He emphasized that the Security Council had entrusted UNOMIG with the primary peacekeeping mandate, and his delegation was of the view that peacekeeping operations needed to have a clear mandate and could not be all-inclusive, still less overextended by assuming responsibilities that fell to other agencies. He expressed regret that the amendments offered by China on the basis of that principled position were not accepted. He expressed his country's belief that it was beyond the competence of the Council to authorize the establishment of the aforementioned office, and stated that it was not in accordance with the Agreement between the two parties concerned. Therefore, the Chinese delegation

²¹ Ibid., pp. 16-17.

²² S/1996/644.

²³ S/1996/843.

²⁴ S/1996/866.

would abstain on the draft resolution. He emphasized that, even if the draft resolution was adopted, it should not set a precedent for other United Nations peacekeeping operations.²⁵

At the same meeting, the draft resolution was put to the vote and adopted by 14 votes to none, with 1 abstention (China), as resolution 1077 (1996).²⁶ which reads:

The Security Council,

Recalling its resolutions 937 (1994) of 21 July 1994, 1036 (1996) of 12 January 1996 and 1065 (1996) of 12 July 1996,

Having considered the reports of the Secretary-General of 1 July and 9 August 1996,

Reiterating its full support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders,

1. *Welcomes* the report of the Secretary-General of 1 July 1996, and in particular paragraph 18 thereof, and decides that the office referred to in this report shall form part of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia, under the authority of its head of Mission, consistent with the arrangements described in paragraph 7 of the report of the Secretary-General of 9 August 1996;

2. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue close cooperation with the Government of Georgia in determining the priorities of the programme referred to in the above-mentioned reports of the Secretary-General and close consultation in its implementation;

3. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to pursue the necessary follow-up arrangements with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

At the same meeting, the President made the following statement on behalf of the Council:²⁷

The Security Council has considered the report of the Secretary-General of 10 October 1996 concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia. It has also taken note of the letter dated 8 October 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council.

The Council notes with deep concern that no significant progress has yet been achieved towards a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict, including on the political status of Abkhazia, respecting the sovereignty and territorial

integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders.

The Council reaffirms its full support for an active role of the United Nations, with the assistance of the Russian Federation as facilitator, aimed at achieving a comprehensive political settlement. In the context of the recent visit to the region of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, the Council requests the Secretary-General to undertake further efforts and make proposals to reinvigorate the stalled peace process.

The Council stresses that the primary responsibility for achieving such reinvigoration of the peace process rests upon the parties themselves and calls upon them, in particular the Abkhaz side, to resume discussions and to reach substantive progress in the negotiations.

The Council is deeply concerned by the deterioration of the situation in the Gali region and its negative impact on the ability of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia to meet its mandated tasks. The Council condemns mine-laying and other threats referred to in the report of the Secretary-General against the Mission and the collective peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States. The Council calls upon both parties to take all the necessary steps to prevent all such acts.

The Council calls upon both parties to respect the Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces signed in Moscow on 14 May 1994 and expresses its concern at the violations referred to in the report of the Secretary-General, in particular the serious violations which recently occurred in the restricted weapons zone.

The Council stresses that the ability of the international community to assist depends on the full cooperation of the parties, especially the fulfilment of their obligations regarding the safety and freedom of movement of international personnel.

The Council is deeply concerned at the announcement made by the Abkhaz side that so-called parliamentary elections would be held on 23 November 1996. The holding of such elections would be possible only after the determination through negotiations of the political status of Abkhazia respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders, within the framework of a comprehensive political settlement, and with the guaranteed possibility of full participation for all refugees and displaced persons. The Council notes that conditions for holding such elections are not met at present. It calls upon the Abkhaz side to call off these elections and further calls upon both sides to refrain from any action that could heighten tension.

The Council remains deeply concerned at the continued obstruction of the return of the refugees and displaced persons by the Abkhaz authorities, which is totally unacceptable.

The Council welcomes the good cooperation between the Mission and the collective peacekeeping force and their efforts to promote stabilization of the situation in the zone of conflict.

²⁵ S/PV.3707, p. 2.

²⁶ For the vote, see S/PV.3707, p. 3.

²⁷ S/PRST/1996/43.

The Council requests the Secretary-General to continue to keep it closely informed of the situation.

**Decision of 20 January 1997 (3735th meeting):
resolution 1096 (1997)**

On 20 January 1997, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1065 (1996), the Secretary-General submitted to the Council a report on the situation in Abkhazia and an update on the operations of UNOMIG.²⁸ In his report, the Secretary-General stated that the key issues of the peace process remained unresolved. He stated that the role of the United Nations ought to be to support the efforts of the two sides to arrive at mutually acceptable compromises that would underpin an overall settlement. He informed the Council that conditions in the Gali sector had not improved. Acts of violence continued to be committed, some of which appeared to be organized by armed groups operating from south of the Inguri river and to be beyond the control of the Government of Georgia. The situation, if allowed to continue, would make it more difficult for UNOMIG to contribute to the creation of conditions conducive to the safe and orderly return of refugees. He called on all concerned to take effective measures to end a situation that could only have negative effects for the return of peace to the region. In conclusion, the Secretary-General stated that despite the difficult circumstances UNOMIG was operating in, the presence of the Mission continued to be a stabilizing factor in the area and to provide useful support to the political process and therefore recommended that the Security Council extend the mandate of UNOMIG for an additional period of six months ending on 31 July 1997.

At its 3735th meeting, held on 20 January 1997 in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations, the Security Council included the report of the Secretary-General in its agenda. Following the adoption of the agenda, the President (Japan), with the consent of the Council, invited the representative of Georgia, at his request, to participate in the discussion without the right to vote. The President then drew the attention of the Council to a draft resolution prepared in the course of the Council's prior consultations.²⁹ The President further drew the attention of the Council to a letter dated 21 January 1997 from the

representative of Georgia addressed to the President of the Security Council,³⁰ transmitting the text of the provisions of the final document of the December 1996 Lisbon Summit of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe pertaining to the situation in Georgia; and a letter dated 24 January 1997 from the representative of Georgia addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a copy of the letter dated 20 January 1997 from the Chairman of the Supreme Council of Abkhazia addressed to the Secretary-General.³¹

At the same meeting, the draft resolution was put to the vote and adopted unanimously as resolution 1096 (1997), which reads:

The Security Council,

Reaffirming all its relevant resolutions, in particular resolution 1065 (1996) of 12 July 1996, and recalling the statement by its President of 22 October 1996,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General of 20 January 1997,

Acknowledging the efforts in support of the peace process of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, the Russian Federation as facilitator, and the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General on Georgia, as mentioned in the report,

Noting with deep concern the continued failure by the parties to resolve their differences due to the uncompromising position taken by the Abkhaz side, and underlining the necessity for the parties to intensify without delay their efforts, under the auspices of the United Nations and with the assistance of the Russian Federation as facilitator, to achieve an early and comprehensive political settlement of the conflict, including on the political status of Abkhazia within the State of Georgia, which fully respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia,

Noting the opening of the United Nations Human Rights Office in Abkhazia, Georgia,

Reaffirming the necessity for the parties strictly to respect human rights, and expressing its support for the efforts of the Secretary-General to find ways to improve their observance as an integral part of the work towards a comprehensive political settlement,

Noting with concern recent frequent violations on both sides of the Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces signed in Moscow on 14 May 1994, as well as acts of violence organized by armed groups operating from south of the Inguri river and beyond the control of the Government of Georgia,

²⁸ S/1997/47.

²⁹ S/1997/93.

³⁰ S/1997/57.

³¹ S/1997/75.

Commending the contribution that the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia and the collective peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States have made to stabilize the situation in the zone of conflict, noting that the cooperation between the Mission and the collective peacekeeping force has developed considerably, and stressing the importance of continued close cooperation and coordination between them in the performance of their respective mandates,

Deeply concerned at the continued deterioration of the security conditions in the Gali region, with an increase in acts of violence by armed groups, and indiscriminate laying of mines, including new types of mines, and deeply concerned also at the continued deterioration of the safety and security of the local populations, of the refugees and displaced persons returning to the region and of the personnel of the Mission and of the collective peacekeeping force,

Reminding the parties that the ability of the international community to assist them depends on their political will to resolve the conflict through dialogue and mutual accommodation, as well as their full cooperation with the Mission and the collective peacekeeping force, including the fulfillment of their obligations regarding the safety and freedom of movement of international personnel,

Taking note of the decision adopted by the Council of Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States on 17 October 1996 to expand the mandate of the collective peacekeeping force in the conflict zone in Abkhazia, Georgia, and to extend it until 31 January 1997,

1. *Welcomes* the report of the Secretary-General of 20 January 1997;

2. *Reiterates its deep concern* at the continued deadlock in achieving a comprehensive settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia;

3. *Reaffirms its commitment* to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, within its internationally recognized borders, and to the necessity of defining the status of Abkhazia in strict accordance with these principles, and underlines the unacceptability of any action by the Abkhaz leadership in contravention of these principles, in particular the holding on 23 November and 7 December 1996 of illegitimate and self-styled parliamentary elections in Abkhazia, Georgia;

4. *Reaffirms its full support* for an active role for the United Nations in the peace process, welcomes the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy aimed at achieving a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict, including on the political status of Abkhazia within the State of Georgia, which fully respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, as well as the efforts that are being undertaken by the Russian Federation in its capacity as facilitator to continue to intensify the search for a peaceful settlement of the conflict, and encourages the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to that end, with the assistance of the Russian Federation as facilitator, and with the support of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe;

5. *Welcomes*, in this context, the initiative of the Secretary-General, as outlined in his report, to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the peace process;

6. *Calls upon* the parties, in particular the Abkhaz side, to achieve substantive progress without further delay towards a comprehensive political settlement, and further calls upon them to cooperate fully with the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General, with the assistance of the Russian Federation as facilitator;

7. *Welcomes* the renewal of direct dialogue at a high level between the parties, calls upon them to intensify the search for a peaceful solution by further expanding their contacts, and requests the Secretary-General to make available all appropriate support if so requested by the parties;

8. *Reaffirms* the right of all refugees and displaced persons affected by the conflict to return to their homes in secure conditions in accordance with international law and as set out in the Quadripartite Agreement on Voluntary Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons of 4 April 1994, condemns the continued obstruction of that return, and stresses the unacceptability of any linkage of the return of refugees and displaced persons with the question of the political status of Abkhazia, Georgia;

9. *Recalls* the conclusions of the Lisbon summit of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe regarding the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, and reaffirms the unacceptability of the demographic changes resulting from the conflict;

10. *Reiterates its condemnation* of killings, particularly those ethnically motivated, and other ethnically related acts of violence;

11. *Reiterates its demand* that the Abkhaz side accelerate significantly the process of voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons without delay or preconditions, in particular by accepting a timetable on the basis of that proposed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and further demands that it guarantee the safety of spontaneous returnees already in the area and regularize their status in cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner and in accordance with the Quadripartite Agreement, in particular in the Gali region;

12. *Welcomes*, in this context, the holding of the meeting on 23 and 24 December 1996 in Gali on the resumption of the orderly repatriation of refugees and displaced persons, in particular to the Gali region, and calls upon the parties to continue these negotiations;

13. *Calls upon* the parties to ensure the full implementation of the Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces signed in Moscow on 14 May 1994;

14. *Condemns* the continued laying of mines, including new types of mines, in the Gali region, which has already caused several deaths and injuries among the civilian population and the

peacekeepers and observers of the international community, and calls upon the parties to take all measures in their power to prevent the laying of mines and intensified activities by armed groups and, to cooperate fully with the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia and the collective peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States in order to honour their commitments to ensure the safety and the freedom of movement of all personnel of the United Nations, the collective peacekeeping force and international humanitarian organizations;

15. *Urges* the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps in response to the threat posed by the laying of mines in order to improve security conditions so as to minimize the danger to Mission personnel and to create conditions for the effective performance of the mandate of the Mission;

16. *Decides* to extend the mandate of the Mission for a new period terminating on 31 July 1997, subject to a review by the Council of the mandate of the Mission in the event of any changes that may be made in the mandate of the collective peacekeeping force;

17. *Expresses its full support* for the implementation of a concrete programme for the protection and promotion of human rights in Abkhazia, Georgia, notes, in this context, the opening on 10 December 1996 of the United Nations Human Rights Office in Abkhazia, Georgia, as part of the Mission, under the authority of the Head of Mission, and requests the Secretary-General to continue to pursue the necessary follow up arrangements with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and to continue close cooperation with the Government of Georgia;

18. *Reiterates its encouragement* to States to contribute to the voluntary fund in support of the implementation of the Moscow Agreement and/or for humanitarian aspects, including demining, as specified by donors;

19. *Requests* the Secretary-General to consider the means of providing technical and financial assistance aimed at the reconstruction of the economy of Abkhazia, Georgia, following the successful outcome of the political negotiations;

20. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to continue to keep the Council regularly informed and to submit a report after three months from the date of adoption of the present resolution on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, including on the operations of the Mission and to provide recommendations in that report on the nature of the United Nations presence, and in this context expresses its intention to conduct a thorough review of the operation at the end of its current mandate;

21. *Decides* to remain actively seized of the matter.

**Decision of 8 May 1997 (3774th meeting):
statement by the President**

On 25 April 1997, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1096 (1997), the Secretary-General

submitted to the Council a report on the situation in Abkhazia and the operations of UNOMIG.³² In his report, the Secretary-General observed that both parties to the conflict seemed determined to continue their direct contacts and to broaden their bilateral relations. The Russian Federation had also supported a strengthened involvement by the United Nations in the political process and agreed that future peacemaking efforts would be guided by a better exchange of information and improved coordination. In response to the increased demands arising from a strengthened involvement by the United Nations in the peacemaking process, the Secretary-General planned to appoint as a successor to his current Special Envoy for Georgia, a resident Special Representative who would be based in Tbilisi and Sukhumi. He also expressed his intention to strengthen the political element of UNOMIG by deploying a few additional officers specialized in political, civil and legal affairs.

At its 3774th meeting, held on 8 May 1997 in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations, the Security Council included the report of the Secretary-General in its agenda. Following the adoption of the agenda, the President (Republic of Korea), with the consent of the Council, invited the representative of Georgia, at his request, to participate in the discussion without the right to vote. The President then drew the attention of the Council to a letter dated 1 April 1997 from the Russian Federation addressed to the Secretary-General,³³ transmitting four instruments adopted by the CIS Council of Heads of State on 28 March 1997; and a letter dated 30 April 1997 from the representatives of Azerbaijan and Georgia addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting resolution 1119 (1997) on conflicts in Transcaucasia adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 22 April 1997.³⁴ The President also drew the attention of the Council to a letter dated 28 April 1997 from the representative of Georgia addressed to the President of the Security Council,³⁵ transmitting a letter from the President of Georgia of 23 April 1997 stating that, for security reasons, the return of refugees and internally displaced

³² S/1997/340.

³³ S/1997/268.

³⁴ S/1997/345.

³⁵ S/1997/339.

persons was not feasible and requesting that the role of the United Nations in the peace process be invigorated.

At the same meeting, following consultations, the President made the following statement on behalf of the Council:³⁶

The Security Council has considered the report of the Secretary-General of 25 April 1997 concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia. It has also taken note of the letter dated 1 April 1997 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and of the letter dated 28 April 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council.

The Council reiterates its full support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders.

The Council reaffirms its full support for a more active role for the United Nations, with the assistance of the Russian Federation as facilitator, aimed at achieving a comprehensive political settlement.

The Council acknowledges the efforts in support of the peace process of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, with the assistance of the Russian Federation as facilitator, and of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General on Georgia, as mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General of 25 April 1997.

In this context, the Council fully supports the proposals made by the Secretary-General in his report to strengthen the involvement of the United Nations in the peacemaking process. It fully supports, in particular, the intention of the Secretary-General to convene a meeting with both sides to map out the areas where concrete political progress can be made. The Council encourages the Secretary-General to explore the idea of revitalizing the Coordinating Commission and establishing expert groups on questions of mutual interest.

The Council welcomes the intention of the Secretary-General to appoint a resident Special Representative, as a successor to his current Special Envoy for Georgia, and to strengthen the political element of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia.

The Council further encourages the Secretary-General to take such steps as are necessary, in cooperation with the parties, in order to ensure a prompt and safe return of the refugees and displaced persons to their homes, with the assistance of all relevant international organizations. The Council takes note of the initiation of activities by the United Nations Human Rights Office in Abkhazia, Georgia.

The Council continues to stress that the primary responsibility for reinvigorating the peace process rests upon the parties themselves. It welcomes the continuation of direct dialogue between the parties. The Council calls upon them, in particular the Abkhaz side, to intensify the search for a peaceful solution by further expanding their contacts, and requests the Secretary-General to make available all appropriate support if so requested by the parties. The Council notes the appeal of the Secretary-General to both parties to pursue the current discussions on the implementation of the decisions adopted by the Council of Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States on 28 March 1997.

The Council remains deeply concerned at the continued deterioration of the security conditions in the Gali region, including acts of violence by armed groups, indiscriminate laying of mines and armed robbery, and the resulting deterioration of the safety and security of the local populations, of the refugees and displaced persons returning to the region, and of the personnel of the Mission and the collective peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States. The Council condemns the acts of violence which have led to the loss of life of members of the collective peacekeeping force. It welcomes the intention of the Secretary-General to continue to make every effort to build upon the positive results recently achieved in order to improve the safety of the military observers and the operational effectiveness of the Mission.

The Council reminds the parties of their obligation to ensure the safety and freedom of movement of the Mission and the collective peacekeeping force and, in particular, to prevent the laying of mines.

The Council welcomes the good cooperation between the Mission and the collective peacekeeping force and their efforts to promote stabilization of the situation in the zone of conflict.

The Council also welcomes the continued efforts by the United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations to address the urgent needs of those suffering most from the consequences of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, in particular internally displaced persons, and encourages further contributions to that end. It also reiterates its encouragement to States to contribute to the voluntary fund in support of the implementation of the Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces and/or for humanitarian aspects, including demining, as specified by donors.

The Council requests the Secretary-General to continue to keep it closely informed of the situation.

**Decision of 31 July 1997 (3807th meeting):
resolution 1124 (1997)**

On 18 July 1997, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1096 (1997), the Secretary-General submitted to the Council a report on the situation in

³⁶ S/PRST/1997/25.

Abkhazia, Georgia and the operations of UNOMIG.³⁷ In his report, the Secretary-General observed that prospects for progress in the Georgian/Abkhaz peace process had improved. The efforts by the Russian Federation to resolve the situation and the declared commitment by the Secretary-General to strengthen the involvement of the United Nations in that process had set in motion a series of initiatives by the parties to the conflict. In the light of progress achieved in the political process and bearing in mind the positive effects that UNOMIG continued to have on the situation, he recommended that the Security Council extend the mandate of the Mission until 31 January 1998, subject to an early review by the Council if decisions taken by the Governments of the States that made up CIS resulted in changes in the mandate of the CIS peacekeeping force.

At its 3807th meeting, held on 31 July 1997 in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations, the Security Council included the report of the Secretary-General in its agenda. Following the adoption of the agenda, the President (Sweden), with the consent of the Council, invited the representatives of Georgia and Germany, at their request, to participate in the discussion without the right to vote. The President then drew the attention of the Council to a letter dated 28 July 1997 from the representative of Georgia addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting the text of a letter of the same date from the President of Georgia addressed to the Secretary-General, concerning the talks held between the Georgian and Abkhaz sides.³⁸

At the same meeting, the President drew the attention of the Council to a draft resolution.³⁹ The draft resolution was then put to the vote and adopted unanimously as resolution 1124 (1997), which reads:

The Security Council,

Recalling all its relevant resolutions, reaffirming in particular resolution 1096 (1997) of 30 January 1997 and recalling the statement by its President of 8 May 1997,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General of 18 July 1997,

Reiterating its full support for the more active role for the United Nations, with the assistance of the Russian Federation as

facilitator, aimed at achieving a comprehensive political settlement,

Acknowledging the efforts in support of the peace process of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, with the assistance of the Russian Federation as facilitator, as well as the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General on Georgia and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as mentioned in the report,

Welcoming, in this context, the indication given in the report that prospects for progress in the peace process have improved, noting with deep concern the continued failure by the parties to resolve their differences, and underlining the necessity for the parties to intensify without delay their efforts to achieve an early and comprehensive political settlement of the conflict, including on the political status of Abkhazia within the State of Georgia, which fully respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia,

Reaffirming the necessity for the parties strictly to respect human rights, expressing its support for the efforts of the Secretary-General to find ways to improve their observance as an integral part of the work towards a comprehensive political settlement, and noting developments in the work of the United Nations Human Rights Office in Abkhazia, Georgia,

Commending the contribution that the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia and the collective peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States have made in stabilizing the situation in the zone of conflict, noting that the cooperation between the Mission and the collective peacekeeping force is good and has continued to develop, and stressing the importance of continued close cooperation and coordination between them in the performance of their respective mandates,

Deeply concerned at the continuing unstable and tense security conditions in the Gali region, characterized by acts of violence by armed groups, by armed robbery, and other common crime and, most seriously, by the laying of mines, including new types of mines, and deeply concerned also at the resulting lack of safety and security for the local populations, for the refugees and displaced persons returning to the region and for the personnel of the Mission and of the collective peacekeeping force,

Reminding the parties that the ability of the international community to assist them depends on their political will to resolve the conflict through dialogue and mutual accommodation, as well as their full cooperation with the Mission and the collective peacekeeping force, including the fulfillment of their obligations regarding the safety and freedom of movement of international personnel,

Taking note of the decision adopted by the Council of Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States on 28 March 1997 to expand the mandate of the collective peacekeeping force in the conflict zone in Abkhazia, Georgia, and to extend it until 31 July 1997, but noting with concern the uncertainty surrounding its extension beyond that date,

³⁷ S/1997/558 and Add.1.

³⁸ S/1997/590.

³⁹ S/1997/594.

1. *Welcomes* the report of the Secretary-General of 18 July 1997;

2. *Reiterates its deep concern* at the continued deadlock in achieving a comprehensive settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia;

3. *Reaffirms its commitment* to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, within its internationally recognized borders, and to the necessity of defining the status of Abkhazia in strict accordance with these principles, and underlines the unacceptability of any action by the Abkhaz leadership in contravention of these principles;

4. *Welcomes* the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative aimed at achieving a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict, including on the political status of Abkhazia within the State of Georgia, which fully respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, and the efforts undertaken by the Russian Federation in its capacity as facilitator, in particular during the last round of talks between the parties held in Moscow in June 1997, to continue to intensify the search for a peaceful settlement of the conflict;

5. *Reaffirms its support* for the more active role for the United Nations in the peace process, encourages the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to that end, with the assistance of the Russian Federation as facilitator, and with the support of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General on Georgia and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and welcomes in this context the holding of a high-level meeting on the conflict, in Geneva from 23 to 25 July 1997, under the aegis of the United Nations, to map out the areas where concrete political progress could be made;

6. *Takes note* of the addendum to the report of the Secretary-General, supports the intention of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to resume the meeting in September, and calls upon the Abkhaz side, in particular, to engage constructively at this resumed meeting;

7. *Stresses* that the primary responsibility for reinvigorating the peace process rests upon the parties themselves, calls upon them to achieve substantive progress without further delay towards a comprehensive political settlement, and further calls upon them to cooperate fully with the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, with the assistance of the Russian Federation as facilitator;

8. *Welcomes* the continuation of direct dialogue between the parties, calls upon them to intensify the search for a peaceful solution by further expanding their contacts, requests the Secretary-General to make available all appropriate support if so requested by the parties, and recalls the appeal of the Secretary-General to both parties to pursue the discussions on the implementation of the above mentioned decision adopted by the Council of Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States on 28 March 1997;

9. *Recalls* the conclusions of the Lisbon summit of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe regarding the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, and reaffirms the unacceptability of the demographic changes resulting from the conflict;

10. *Reiterates its condemnation* of killings, particularly those ethnically motivated, and other ethnically related acts of violence;

11. *Reaffirms* the right of all refugees and displaced persons affected by the conflict to return to their homes in secure conditions in accordance with international law and as set out in the Quadripartite Agreement on Voluntary Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons of 4 April 1994, condemns the continued obstruction of that return, and stresses the unacceptability of any linkage of the return of refugees and displaced persons with the question of the political status of Abkhazia, Georgia;

12. *Reiterates its demand* that the Abkhaz side accelerate significantly the process of voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons without delay or preconditions, in particular by accepting a timetable on the basis of that proposed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and further demands that it guarantee the safety of spontaneous returnees already in the area and regularize their status in cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner and in accordance with the Quadripartite Agreement, in particular in the Gali region;

13. *Calls upon* the parties to ensure the full implementation of the Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces signed in Moscow on 14 May 1994;

14. *Condemns* the continued laying of mines, including new types of mines, in the Gali region, which has already caused several deaths and injuries among the civilian population and the peacekeepers and observers of the international community, and calls upon the parties to take all measures in their power to prevent the laying of mines and intensified activities by armed groups and to cooperate fully with the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia and the collective peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States in order to honour their commitments to ensure the safety and the freedom of movement of all personnel of the United Nations, the collective peacekeeping force and international humanitarian organizations;

15. *Urges* the Secretary-General to continue to take the necessary steps in response to the threat posed by the laying of mines in order to improve security conditions so as to minimize the danger to Mission personnel and to create conditions for the effective performance of the mandate of the Mission;

16. *Decides* to extend the mandate of the Mission for a new period terminating on 31 January 1998 subject to a review by the Council of the mandate in the event of any changes that may be made in the mandate or in the presence of the collective peacekeeping force, and welcomes the intention of the

Secretary-General, as mentioned in his report, to keep the Council informed of developments in this regard;

17. *Reiterates its full support* for the implementation of a concrete programme for the protection and promotion of human rights in Abkhazia, Georgia;

18. *Welcomes* the continued efforts by the United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations to address the urgent needs of those suffering most from the consequences of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, in particular internally displaced persons, encourages further contributions to that end, and reiterates its encouragement to States to contribute to the voluntary fund in support of the implementation of the Moscow Agreement and/or for humanitarian aspects, including demining, as specified by donors;

19. *Requests* the Secretary-General to consider the means of providing technical and financial assistance aimed at the reconstruction of the economy of Abkhazia, Georgia, following the successful outcome of the political negotiations;

20. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to keep the Council regularly informed, to report after three months from the date of adoption of the present resolution on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, including on the operations of the Mission, and to provide recommendations in that report on the nature of the United Nations presence, and in this context expresses its intention to conduct a thorough review of the operation at the end of its current mandate;

21. *Decides* to remain actively seized of the matter.

**Decision of 6 November 1997 (3830th meeting):
statement by the President**

On 28 October 1997, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1124 (1997), the Secretary-General submitted to the Council a report on the situation in Abkhazia and the operations of UNOMIG.⁴⁰ In his report, the Secretary-General stated that, despite efforts, there continued to be no progress on the key issues, although both sides had reaffirmed their commitment to resolving the conflict by political means. He noted that the mandate of the Security Council provided for an innovative, experimental mediatory arrangement that offered the potential for productive synergy that could usefully assist the parties in their difficult challenge and that without the presence of UNOMIG and the CIS peacekeeping force, there could be little doubt that open conflict would resume. While ceasefire violations had been limited to incidents of a non-violent nature, several longstanding and significant violations of the Agreement on a

Ceasefire and Separation of Forces, signed in Moscow on 14 May 1994,⁴¹ had remained. The Secretary-General, therefore, called on the parties to abide fully by the Agreement and to cooperate with the Mission in that regard. In addition, the mine threat as well as armed and criminal activities had been threatening the lives of innocent civilians and had affected the operations of aid agencies, the CIS peacekeeping force and UNOMIG. He called on both sides to do all they could to improve the security situation in the area and to end such activities.

At its 3830th meeting, held on 6 November 1997 in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations, the Security Council included the report of the Secretary-General in its agenda. Following the adoption of the agenda, the President (China), with the consent of the Council, invited the representative of Georgia and Germany, at their request, to participate in the discussion without the right to vote.

At the same meeting, the President made the following statement on behalf of the Council:⁴²

The Security Council has considered the report of the Secretary-General of 28 October 1997 concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia.

The Council regrets that, despite strenuous efforts to reactivate the peace process, there has been no visible progress on the key issues of the settlement—the future political status of Abkhazia and the permanent return of refugees and displaced persons.

The Council attaches particular importance to the more active role for the United Nations in the peace process, and encourages the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to that end, with the assistance of the Russian Federation as facilitator, and with the support of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General on Georgia and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The Council calls upon the parties to cooperate fully with these efforts.

In this context, the Council regrets that the adjourned high-level meeting on the conflict, held in Geneva under the aegis of the United Nations, did not resume in October as initially planned. It welcomes the intention of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to resume this meeting on 17 November to map out the areas where concrete political progress could be made, to take forward discussion of social and economic issues in support of a comprehensive settlement of the conflict, and to address the issue of the return of refugees. The

⁴⁰ S/1997/827.

⁴¹ S/1994/583.

⁴² S/PRST/1997/50.

Council calls upon all concerned to do their utmost for the resumption of this meeting with the constructive engagement in particular of the Abkhaz side.

The Council commends the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative aimed at achieving a comprehensive settlement of the conflict, including on the political status of Abkhazia within the State of Georgia, which respects fully the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, and the efforts undertaken by the Russian Federation as facilitator, in particular the initiative put forward by the President of the Russian Federation on 1 August 1997 and the Georgian-Abkhaz negotiations held in Sukhumi on 9 and 10 September with the participation of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. The Council welcomes the meeting of the President of Georgia and Mr. Vladislav Ardzinba in Tbilisi on 14 August 1997, facilitated by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, and the continuation of direct dialogue between the parties, and calls upon them to intensify the search for a peaceful solution by further expanding their contacts.

The Council further encourages the Secretary-General to take such steps as are necessary, in cooperation with the parties, to ensure a prompt and safe return of the refugees and displaced persons to their homes, with the assistance of all relevant international organizations.

The Council welcomes the decision of the Council of Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General to extend the mandate of the collective peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States until 31 January 1998.

The Council welcomes the good cooperation between the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia and the collective peacekeeping force and their efforts to promote stabilization of the situation in the zone of conflict. The Council calls upon the parties to cooperate fully with the Mission and the peacekeeping force.

The Council expresses concern at the continuing violations of the Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces signed in Moscow on 14 May 1994 and calls upon the parties to ensure the full implementation of this agreement.

The Council remains deeply concerned at the continuing unstable and tense security conditions in the Gali and Zugdidi sectors and in the Kodori valley. The Council strongly condemns the kidnapping of personnel of the Mission and the collective peacekeeping force.

The Council also condemns the continued laying of mines, including more sophisticated types of mines, which has already caused several deaths and injuries among the civilian population and the peacekeepers and observers of the international community. It calls upon the parties to take all measures in their power to prevent the laying of mines and intensified activities by armed groups and to cooperate fully with the Mission and the collective peacekeeping force in order to honour their commitments to ensure the safety and the

freedom of movement of all personnel of the United Nations, the collective peacekeeping force and international humanitarian organizations.

The Council supports the additional measures envisaged by the Secretary-General in the report to improve the safety of Mission personnel and to create conditions for the effective performance of the mandate of the Mission.

The Council welcomes the continued efforts by the United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations to address the urgent needs of those suffering most from the consequences of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, in particular internally displaced persons, encourages further contributions to that end, and reiterates its encouragement to States to contribute to the voluntary fund in support of the implementation of the Moscow Agreement and/or for humanitarian aspects, including demining, as specified by donors.

The Council reminds the parties that the ability of the international community to assist them depends on their political will to resolve the conflict through dialogue and mutual accommodation.

Decision of 30 January 1998 (3851st meeting): resolution 1150 (1998)

On 19 January 1998, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1124 (1997), the Secretary-General submitted to the Council a report on the situation in Abkhazia and an update on the operations of UNOMIG.⁴³ In his report, the Secretary-General informed the Council that much groundwork had been laid during the reporting period towards achieving substantive progress in the Georgian/Abkhaz peace process and that the political machinery to address the military, political and economic ramifications of the peace process was in place. Progress, therefore, depended on the determination of the two sides to negotiate in earnest and to work constructively with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to achieve substantial results. He noted that, thanks in part to additional steps taken to ensure the security of the Mission, UNOMIG had been able to carry out the tasks entrusted to it in relative safety. Bearing in mind that the presence of UNOMIG continued to be a stabilizing factor in the area and to provide useful support for the political process, and in the light of the steps already taken to promote substantive progress in the peace process, he recommended that the Security Council extend the mandate of UNOMIG for an additional period of six months, ending on 31 July

⁴³ S/1998/51.

1998, subject to a review by the Council in the event of any changes made in the mandate of the CIS peacekeeping force.

At its 3851st meeting, held on 30 January 1998 in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations, the Security Council included the report of the Secretary-General in its agenda. Following the adoption of the agenda, the President (France), with the consent of the Council, invited the representatives of Georgia and Germany, at their request, to participate in the discussion without the right to vote. The President then drew the attention of the Council to a letter dated 12 January 1998 from the representative of Georgia addressed to the Secretary-General,⁴⁴ transmitting the text of a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia regarding acts of hostage-taking in the Gali region of Abkhazia. In the letter, the Government of Georgia expressed its belief that the Security Council, the Secretary-General, his Special Representative and the Government of the Russian Federation would make every effort to prevent the escalation of tension from creating realistic grounds for reversing the process of the return of refugees and displaced persons, and for the protection of their rights. In the implementation of the above, the Government of Georgia deemed it necessary to reinforce the mandate of the United Nations observers to include police functions, to qualitatively enhance the activities of the Human Rights Office and seriously to consider the commencement of a comprehensive international peacekeeping operation.

At the same meeting, the President drew the attention of the Council to a draft resolution.⁴⁵ The draft resolution was then put to the vote and adopted unanimously as resolution 1150 (1998), which reads:

The Security Council,

Recalling all its relevant resolutions, reaffirming in particular resolution 1124 (1997) of 31 July 1997, and recalling the statement by its President of 6 November 1997,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General of 19 January 1998,

Supporting the vigorous efforts to move the peace process forward made by the Secretary-General and his Special Representative aimed at achieving a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict, including on the political status of

Abkhazia within the State of Georgia, respecting fully the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, with the assistance of the Russian Federation as facilitator, as well as of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General and of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe,

Stressing in this context the importance of the concluding statement adopted in Geneva on 19 November 1997 in which both sides welcomed, inter alia, the proposals of the Secretary-General to strengthen the involvement of the United Nations in the peace process, approved a programme of action and set up a mechanism for its implementation,

Reaffirming the necessity for the parties strictly to respect human rights, expressing its support for the efforts of the Secretary-General to find ways to improve their observance as an integral part of the work towards a comprehensive political settlement, and noting developments in the work of the United Nations Human Rights Office in Abkhazia, Georgia,

Deeply concerned at the continuing unsettled and tense security situation in the Gali region, characterized by the laying of mines, by a rising number of criminal activities, including kidnapping and murder, and, most seriously, by significantly increased subversive activities by armed groups which disrupt the peace process and impede a settlement of the conflict and the return of refugees, and at the resulting lack of safety and security for the local population, for the refugees and displaced persons returning to the region, for aid workers and for the personnel of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia and of the collective peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States,

Welcoming in this context the contribution that the collective peacekeeping force and the Mission have made to stabilizing the situation in the zone of conflict, noting that the cooperation between the Mission and the collective peacekeeping force is good and has continued to develop, and stressing the importance of continued close cooperation and coordination between them in the performance of their respective mandates,

1. *Welcomes* the report of the Secretary-General of 19 January 1998;

2. *Notes with satisfaction* that much groundwork has now been laid towards achieving substantive progress in the peace process, but reiterates its deep concern that, as yet, no significant progress has been made on the key issues in the settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia;

3. *Commends* the parties for the constructive approach shown at the meeting held in Geneva from 17 to 19 November 1997, welcomes in this context the establishment and the first meetings of the Coordinating Council and, within its framework, of working groups, under the chairmanship of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and stresses the importance of the effective working of these bodies in order to help progress towards a settlement;

⁴⁴ S/1998/25.

⁴⁵ S/1998/79.

4. *Emphasizes* the fact that the primary responsibility for reinvigorating the peace process rests upon the parties themselves, and reminds them that the ability of the international community to assist them depends on their political will to resolve the conflict through dialogue and mutual accommodation and on their taking real steps towards bringing about a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict through the speediest possible agreement on and signature of the relevant documents;

5. *Reaffirms* the particular importance it attaches to the more active role for the United Nations in the peace process, encourages the Secretary-General and his Special Representative to continue their efforts, with the assistance of the Russian Federation as facilitator, and with the support of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and calls upon the parties to work constructively with them to achieve a comprehensive settlement;

6. *Encourages* the continuation of direct dialogue between the parties, calls upon them to intensify the search for a peaceful solution by further expanding their contacts, and requests the Secretary-General to make available all appropriate support if so requested by the parties;

7. *Recalls* the conclusions of the Lisbon summit of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe regarding the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, reaffirms the unacceptability of the demographic changes resulting from the conflict and the right of all refugees and displaced persons affected by the conflict to return to their homes in secure conditions in accordance with international law and as set out in the Quadripartite Agreement on the Voluntary Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons, of 4 April 1994, encourages the Secretary-General to take such steps as are necessary, in cooperation with the parties, to ensure a prompt and safe return of the refugees and displaced persons to their homes, and stresses the urgent need for progress in this area, in particular from the Abkhaz side;

8. *Calls upon* the parties to ensure the full implementation of the Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces signed in Moscow on 14 May 1994;

9. *Condemns* the intensified activities by armed groups, including the continued laying of mines, in the Gali region, and calls upon the parties to honour fully their commitments to take all measures in their power and to coordinate their efforts to prevent such activities, and to cooperate fully with the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia and the collective peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States in order to ensure the safety and the freedom of movement of all personnel of the United Nations, the collective peacekeeping force and international humanitarian organizations;

10. *Welcomes* the additional steps taken in order to improve security conditions so as to minimize the danger to Mission personnel and to create conditions for the effective

performance of the mandate of the Mission, and urges the Secretary-General to continue to make further arrangements in this field;

11. *Decides* to extend the mandate of the Mission for a new period terminating on 31 July 1998, subject to a review by the Council of the mandate of the Mission in the event of any changes that may be made in the mandate or in the presence of the collective peacekeeping force;

12. *Encourages* further contributions to address the urgent needs of those suffering most from the consequences of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, in particular internally displaced persons, including contributions to the voluntary fund in support of the implementation of the Moscow Agreement and/or for humanitarian aspects, including demining, as specified by donors, requests the Secretary-General to consider the means of providing technical and financial assistance aimed at the reconstruction of the economy of Abkhazia, Georgia, following the successful outcome of the political negotiations, and welcomes the planning of a needs assessment mission;

13. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to keep the Council regularly informed, to report after three months from the date of the adoption of the present resolution on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, including on the operations of the Mission, and to provide recommendations in that report on the nature of the United Nations presence, and, in this context, expresses its intention to conduct a thorough review of the operation at the end of its current mandate;

14. *Decides* to remain actively seized of the matter.

**Decision of 28 May 1998 (3887th meeting):
statement by the President**

On 11 May 1998, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1150 (1998), the Secretary-General submitted to the Council a report on the situation in Abkhazia and the operations of UNOMIG.⁴⁶ In his report, the Secretary-General stated that the sustained efforts to move the Georgian/Abkhaz peace process forward had been negatively affected by a new wave of tension in the area, marked by an assassination attempt on the President of Georgia and deteriorating security conditions in the UNOMIG area of operations. The personnel and property of UNOMIG had continued to be subjected to acts of violence by criminal groups, and a particularly serious incident had taken place on 19 February, when a group of 15 to 20 armed men forcibly entered the sector headquarters of UNOMIG in Zugdidi, and took four observers hostage. In view of those developments, the Secretary-General suggested

⁴⁶ S/1998/375 and Add.1.

that a possible solution would be to provide the Mission with a self-protection unit, along with the necessary civilian support personnel, whose task would be to guard each of the facilities of UNOMIG, except the one in Tbilisi. He also expressed his belief that there was much to be done by both sides and, in particular by the Government of Georgia, to improve the security situation in the area of operation of UNOMIG. If the Security Council agreed with the concept of a self-protection unit, he stated that his Special Representative would consult with the Abkhaz authorities, in close consultation with the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General, bearing in mind that the agreement of both parties would be a condition for the deployment of such a unit. If the Council preferred a different approach, he suggested three options: reducing UNOMIG to the minimal possible presence, pending a significant improvement in the security situation; redeploying UNOMIG at its authorized strength and resuming previous operations using mine and ballistic-protected vehicles; or strengthening security arrangements with the CIS peacekeeping force.

At its 3887th meeting, held on 28 May 1998 in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations, the Security Council included the report of the Secretary-General in its agenda. The President (Kenya) then drew the attention of the Council to a letter dated 14 April 1998 from the representative of Georgia addressed to the Secretary-General;⁴⁷ and letters dated 22 and 26 May 1998, respectively, from the representative of Georgia addressed to the President of the Security Council.⁴⁸ In the letters, the Government of Georgia informed the Council of ethnic-related incidents in the Gali region and of large-scale military operations that the Abkhaz separatists had carried out in the security zone, which had prompted the exodus of more than 30,000 returnees. He expressed his country's belief that the Security Council needed to make a decision with regard to the resettlement of recently expelled returnees and their humanitarian assistance. Georgia was confident that the time had come to acknowledge that the conflict might threaten international peace and security, which would allow the Council to act in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

⁴⁷ S/1998/329.

⁴⁸ S/1998/423 and S/1998/432.

At the same meeting, the President also drew the attention of the Council to a letter dated 5 May 1998 from the representative of the Russian Federation addressed to the Secretary-General.⁴⁹ The President then made the following statement on behalf of the Council:⁵⁰

The Security Council has considered the report of the Secretary-General of 11 May 1998 concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia.

The Council is gravely concerned by the recent outbreak of violence in the zone of conflict, which has resulted in the loss of human life and a significant outflow of refugees, and calls upon the parties to observe strictly the Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces signed in Moscow on 14 May 1994 and also the ceasefire protocol signed on 25 May 1998, as well as all their obligations to refrain from the use of force and to resolve disputed issues by peaceful means only.

The Council is deeply concerned by the recent slowing of the peace process. The Council calls upon the parties to display the necessary political will to achieve substantial results on the key issues of the negotiations within the framework of the United Nations-led peace process and through direct dialogue, with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia.

The Council reaffirms the right of all refugees and displaced persons affected by the conflict to return to their homes in secure conditions, calls upon both sides to fulfil their obligations in this regard, and welcomes in this context the efforts undertaken by the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States, as set out in their decision of 28 April 1998, in support of the return of refugees and of a comprehensive political settlement.

The Council is deeply concerned that the deteriorating security situation in the Gali region gravely impedes the work of aid workers, personnel of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia and of the collective peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States. The Council calls upon the parties to honour fully their commitments to take all measures in their power to improve the security situation, including the creation of a joint mechanism for investigation and prevention of acts that represent violations of the Moscow Agreement and terrorist acts in the zone of conflict.

The Council requests the Secretary-General to consult both sides on the basis of paragraphs 26, 48 and 49 of his report, in particular on the concept of the self-protection unit outlined therein, and on other options as appropriate, in close cooperation

⁴⁹ Letter transmitting the decision of 28 April 1998 of the Council of the Heads of State of the CIS on additional measures for the settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia (S/1998/372).

⁵⁰ S/PRST/1998/16.

with the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General, bearing in mind the need to secure the consent of both parties to his proposal. The Council also requests the Secretary-General to report to it on the outcome of those consultations as soon as possible and no later than 12 June 1998.

**Decision of 30 July 1998 (3912th meeting):
resolution 1187 (1998)**

On 14 July 1998, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1150 (1998), the Secretary-General submitted to the Council a report on the situation in Abkhazia and the operations of UNOMIG.⁵¹ In his report, the Secretary-General stated that, during the reporting period, his Special Representative and the Russian Federation in its capacity as facilitator were forced to address one immediate crisis after another, caused by the lack of willingness on the part of both sides to renounce violence and seriously consider peaceful options for the resolution of the conflict. Some 40,000 people from the Gali district had had to seek refuge for the second time on the other side of the Inguri river, and the international community had to witness how its assistance and efforts “literally went up in flames”, when houses that had been constructed out of UNHCR funds were deliberately set on fire, with the motive apparently to expel people from their home areas. As the situation on the ground was tense and the risk of new confrontations was high, he informed the Council that he had asked his Special Representative to make demarches to both sides to prevent the resumption of hostilities. The Special Representative was also maintaining liaison with the parties in order to consider the organization of another high-level meeting in Geneva, with a view to bringing the “Geneva process” back on track. He also stated that, despite the support of the Security Council, the self-protection unit option had not been accepted by the Abkhaz side and that neither party had supported the option that UNOMIG be reduced to the minimal possible presence. He stressed that he would keep the matter under constant review, but that both sides still had to make substantial efforts to contain the threat on the ground. Activities in the Gali sector by armed groups, who operated from the Georgian side of the Inguri river, required a determined effort by the authorities of Georgia to contain them. At the same time, the Abkhaz side needed to do much more than it had done to

protect the Mission elsewhere in Abkhazia and the harassment campaign launched against UNOMIG would only exacerbate the situation on the ground. As the presence of the Mission continued to be a stabilizing factor in the area and to provide useful support for the political process, the Secretary-General recommended that the Security Council extend the mandate of the Mission for a further period of six months terminating on 31 January 1999, subject to a review by the Council of the mandate of UNOMIG in the event of any changes in the mandate or in the presence of the CIS peacekeeping force.

At its 3912th meeting, held on 30 July 1998 in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations, the Security Council included the report of the Secretary-General in its agenda. Following the adoption of the agenda, the President (Russian Federation), with the consent of the Council, invited the representatives of Georgia and Germany, at their request, to participate in the discussion without the right to vote. The President then drew the attention of the Council to a draft resolution submitted by France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States.⁵² The President also drew the attention of the Council to two letters dated 15 July 1998 as well as to ones dated 16 and 17 July 1998, respectively, from the representative of Georgia addressed to the President of the Security Council, transmitting statements on incidents in Abkhazia and elsewhere.⁵³ Finally, he drew the attention of the Council to a letter dated 14 July 1998 from the representative of the Russian Federation addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning events in Gali district in Abkhazia, Georgia.⁵⁴

At the same meeting, the representative of Georgia stated that the tragic events in the Gali district had clearly shown that the peace process was at a critical point and required a new and possibly unconventional assessment of the situation. Despite the concrete proposals made by the Georgian side and because of the intransigence of the Abkhaz leadership, an agreement on the political status of Abkhazia had not yet been reached and the fate of some 250,000 refugees and displaced persons remained unsolved. He

⁵¹ S/1998/647 and Add.1.

⁵² S/1998/699.

⁵³ S/1998/649, S/1998/650, S/1998/655 and S/1998/660.

⁵⁴ S/1998/645.

stressed that, while Georgia had been hopeful when the Geneva negotiations had started under the leadership of the United Nations with the participation of the Russian Federation as facilitator, the OSCE and the members of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General,⁵⁵ the events in the Gali district during May 1998 had called the “Geneva process” into question. Despite the negotiations, the Abkhaz separatist regime had continued to follow its policy of terror against the population of the Gali district and only the vigorous efforts of his Government had made it possible to prevent the involvement of Georgia in a full-scale war. Noting that violence still continued in the region even after the introduction of the ceasefire, he underscored the worry that the Abkhaz side continued to reject implementation of its obligations regarding the unconditional return of refugees expelled during the events of May, as stipulated in the agreement signed on 25 May 1998. He noted that the punitive operations had been carried out within the 12-kilometre security zone controlled by the peacekeeping contingent, which demonstrated the fragility of the mechanism of the ceasefire regime in the conflict zone. He also expressed regret that the proposal by Georgia on the expansion of the mandate and functions of the peacekeeping operation had been flatly rejected by the Abkhaz side, whereas the international organizations and other participants in the peace process had failed to be demanding enough during the adoption of such an important decision. While his country condemned any action directed against the civilian population and would take all possible measures against such action, he believed that without international efforts and concrete steps on the part of the United Nations, the resolution of the problem would be impossible. He expressed his country’s belief that it was necessary to create a crisis management mechanism in the conflict zone, and reiterated his country’s support for the United Nations self-protection unit. He also stressed that the effectiveness of the conflict-resolution mechanism depended on the monitoring of the human rights situation, and the Gali events had made it clear that the Human Rights Office required changes and serious reinforcement. In closing, he conveyed the appeal of the President of Georgia that the international community adopt a decision which lived up to the

⁵⁵ France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States.

aspirations of the Security Council, reflecting the real situation in the conflict zone and suggesting relevant assessments and findings. Such a resolution needed to differ from the previous 18 documents, contribute to the decrease of tension and give new impetus to the reinvigoration of the negotiations.⁵⁶

The representative of the Russian Federation expressed his deep concern at the continuing tense situation in the Gali region and noted that the Gagra Protocol on a Ceasefire and Withdrawal of Armed Formations of 25 May 1998 was not being implemented either by the Abkhaz or by the Georgian side. He demanded from the Abkhaz side the establishment of conditions for the speedy return of the peaceful civilians that had left that region as a result of the hostilities and stressed that, if the Abkhaz authorities posed obstacles to their return, such actions would be regarded as being aimed at the implementation of “ethnic cleansing”. He expressed his delegation’s deep concern with the problem of the security of UNOMIG personnel and his belief that the greatest responsibility lay with the Georgian and the Abkhaz sides, which needed to immediately take the measures that were needed. He informed the Council that with the mediation of the Russian Federation, the sides had been actively negotiating on preparations for a meeting between the President of Georgia and the Abkhaz leader, which would eliminate the consequences of the events of May in the Gali region and would allow for the adoption of a package of documents on key issues in order to reach a settlement. He reiterated that the Russian Federation was ready to promote comprehensively both the implementation of the agreements achieved in Geneva and the advancement of an overall settlement.⁵⁷

The representatives of the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany stressed that the events of May 1998 were a direct result of the lack of commitment by the parties and that, unless there was an improvement in the peace process and in the security situation on the ground, a reconsideration of the United Nations peacekeeping commitment could not be excluded.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ S/PV.3912, pp. 2-4.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6 (Germany); pp. 7-8 (United Kingdom); and pp. 13-14 (United States).

Several other speakers expressed grave concern at the resumption of hostilities in May 1998 and called on the parties to observe the relevant ceasefire agreements. They also expressed concern at the new outflow of refugees from the region and reaffirmed the right of all refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes in secure conditions. They stressed that the Abkhaz side should allow immediately and without any conditions the return of all persons displaced since the resumption of the hostilities in May. A number of speakers also pointed to the need for the Georgian authorities to curb the operation of groups from the Georgian side of the Inguri river. They condemned the acts of violence against the personnel of UNOMIG and the renewed laying of mines. Expressing grave concern at the security situation on the ground, many speakers welcomed the intention of the Secretary-General to keep that issue under constant review. Others spoke in favour of a self-protection unit in UNOMIG.⁵⁹

At the same meeting, the draft resolution was put to the vote and adopted unanimously as resolution 1187 (1998), which reads:

The Security Council,

Reaffirming all its relevant resolutions, in particular resolution 1150 (1998) of 30 January 1998, recalling the statement by its President of 28 May 1998, and recalling also the letter from its President to the Secretary-General dated 10 July 1998,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General of 14 July 1998,

Deeply concerned at the continuing tense and confrontational situation in the Zugdidi and Gali regions and at the risk of resumed fighting,

Deeply concerned also at the unwillingness on the part of both sides to renounce violence and seriously consider peaceful options for the resolution of the conflict,

Supporting the vigorous efforts made by the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, with the assistance of the Russian Federation in its capacity as facilitator as well as of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General and of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, to prevent the resumption of hostilities and to give a new impetus to the negotiations within the United Nations-led peace process, and welcoming in this context the adoption by the parties of the

concluding statement of the meeting held in Geneva from 23 to 25 July 1998 and the accompanying statement of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General,

Reaffirming the necessity for the parties strictly to respect human rights, expressing its support for the efforts of the Secretary-General to find ways to improve their observance as an integral part of the work towards a comprehensive political settlement, and noting developments in the work of the United Nations Human Rights Office in Abkhazia, Georgia,

Welcoming the role of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia and of the collective peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States as stabilizing factors in the zone of conflict, noting that the cooperation between the Mission and the collective peacekeeping force is good, and stressing the importance of continued close cooperation and coordination between them in the performance of their respective mandates,

1. *Welcomes* the report of the Secretary-General of 14 July 1998;

2. *Reiterates its grave concern* at the resumption of hostilities in May 1998, and calls upon the parties to observe strictly the Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces signed in Moscow on 14 May 1994 and also the ceasefire protocol signed on 25 May 1998, as well as all their obligations to refrain from the use of force and to resolve disputed issues by peaceful means only;

3. *Expresses its deep concern* at the significant outflow of refugees resulting from the recent hostilities, reaffirms the right of all refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes in secure conditions in accordance with international law and as set out in the Quadripartite Agreement on the Voluntary Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons of 4 April 1994, calls upon both sides to fulfil their obligations in this regard, and demands in particular that the Abkhaz side allow the unconditional and immediate return of all persons displaced since the resumption of hostilities in May 1998;

4. *Condemns* the deliberate destruction of houses by Abkhaz forces, with the apparent motive of expelling people from their home areas;

5. *Recalls* the conclusions of the Lisbon summit of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe regarding the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, and reaffirms the unacceptability of the demographic changes resulting from the conflict;

6. *Expresses its deep concern* at the extremely difficult humanitarian situation of the displaced persons from the Gali region as well as of those who remained in that area, and at the serious negative impact recent developments have had on international humanitarian efforts in the Gali region;

7. *Reiterates* that the primary responsibility for achieving peace rests upon the parties themselves, and reminds them that the continued commitment of the international

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6 (France); pp. 6-7 (Portugal); p. 8 (Japan); pp. 8-9 (China); pp. 9-10 (Costa Rica); p. 10 (Sweden); p. 10 (Gabon); pp. 10-11 (Gambia); pp. 11-12 (Brazil); p. 12 (Slovenia); and p. 12 (Bahrain).

community to assist them depends on their progress in this regard;

8. *Calls upon* the parties to display without delay the necessary political will to achieve substantial results on the key issues of the negotiations, with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, within the framework of the United Nations-led peace process and through direct dialogue, and to cooperate fully with the efforts made by the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, with the assistance of the Russian Federation as facilitator, as well as of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General and of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe;

9. *Welcomes* the meeting of the parties held in Geneva from 23 to 25 July 1998, and calls upon them to continue and increase their active engagement in this process initiated by the Secretary-General aimed at achieving a comprehensive political settlement;

10. *Reminds* the parties of their commitments to take all measures in their power and to coordinate their efforts to ensure the security and safety of international personnel, and calls upon them to implement fully and without delay those commitments, including the creation of a joint mechanism for investigation and prevention of acts that represent violations of the Moscow Agreement and terrorist acts in the zone of conflict;

11. *Condemns* the acts of violence against the personnel of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia, the renewed laying of mines in the Gali region and also the attacks by armed groups, operating in the Gali region from the Georgian side of the Inguri River, against the collective peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States, and demands that the parties, in particular the Georgian authorities, take determined measures to put a stop to such acts which subvert the peace process;

12. *Reiterates its deep concern* regarding the security of the Mission, welcomes the measures already taken to improve security conditions to minimize the danger to Mission personnel and to create conditions for the implementation of the mandated tasks of the Mission, underlines the need to continue to make further arrangements in this field, welcomes also the instruction of the Secretary-General that the security of the Mission be kept under constant review, and calls upon the two parties to facilitate the implementation of practical measures resulting from that review;

13. *Expresses its concern* at the mass media campaign launched in Abkhazia, Georgia, and the acts of harassment against the Mission, and calls upon the Abkhaz side to cease those acts;

14. *Decides* to extend the mandate of the Mission for a new period terminating on 31 January 1999, subject to a review by the Council of the mandate of the Mission in the event of any changes that may be made in the mandate or in the presence of the collective peacekeeping force;

15. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to keep the Council regularly informed, to report three months after the date of the adoption of the present resolution on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, including on the operations of the Mission, and expresses its intention to conduct a review of the Mission in the light of the report of the Secretary-General, taking into account in particular the progress made by the two parties in creating secure conditions in which the Mission can fulfil its existing mandate, and in establishing a political settlement;

16. *Decides* to remain actively seized of the matter.

Decision of 25 November 1998 (3948th meeting): statement by the President

On 29 October 1998, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1187 (1998), the Secretary-General submitted to the Council a report on the situation on Abkhazia and the operations of UNOMIG.⁶⁰ In his report, the Secretary-General stated that the recent meeting in Athens between the Georgian and Abkhaz sides on confidence-building measures had been an achievement, and he appealed to them to implement in good faith the measures agreed upon at the meeting. He underlined that he continued to be concerned by the security situation of UNOMIG, which was threatening the very viability of the Mission. An ambush in Sukhumi on 21 September 1998 had been a deliberate attack on the United Nations, and its intent was clearly to kill UNOMIG personnel. Prior to the attack, patrolling and other activities of UNOMIG had already been curtailed for security reasons. He stressed that, unless the parties took urgent measures to improve the security environment for the United Nations, he would be obliged to draw down the strength of the Mission and to consider relocating United Nations personnel and facilities to more secure locations. Should UNOMIG be compelled to withdraw from Abkhazia, the situation in the security and restricted weapons zones would almost certainly become more serious, and a return to open hostilities could not be excluded. Therefore, he urged Member States, and the members of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General in particular, to use their influence with the parties to ensure that the security environment improved significantly. In the meantime, he recommended that the Security Council consider whether increasing substantially the number of internationally recruited security personnel to provide internal security to the

⁶⁰ S/1998/1012 and Add.1.

installations of the Mission might offer at least a partial solution.

At its 3948th meeting, held on 25 November 1998 in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations, the Security Council included the report of the Secretary-General in its agenda.

At the same meeting, the President (United States) made the following statement on behalf of the Council:⁶¹

The Security Council has considered the report of the Secretary-General of 29 October 1998 concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia.

The Council remains deeply concerned at the continuing tense and unstable situation in the Gali and Zugdidi regions and at the threat of resumption of serious hostilities. The Council demands that both sides observe strictly all their obligations to refrain from the use of force and to resolve disputed issues by peaceful means only.

The Council welcomes the reinvigoration of the negotiations within the United Nations-led peace process. It particularly welcomes the meeting of both sides on confidence-building measures held in Athens from 16 to 18 October 1998, the largest and most representative meeting of the parties since the military confrontation of 1993, and the increased bilateral contacts between the two sides. The Council strongly urges the two sides to build on this momentum to widen their commitment to the United Nations-led peace process, to continue to intensify their discussion, in particular within the Coordinating Council, and to expand their relations at all levels. The Council also strongly encourages the parties to work together in order to convene a meeting between the President of Georgia and Mr. Vladislav Ardzinba and to reach agreements, in particular on the return of refugees and measures for the economic rehabilitation of Abkhazia, Georgia, as a concrete step towards easing tensions and leading to improvement in the security environment. The Council reiterates its call to both sides to display without delay the necessary will to achieve substantial results on the key issues of the negotiations, and calls upon them to implement promptly and in good faith their undertakings, so that living conditions for the population on both sides can be improved by practical confidence-building measures.

The Council strongly condemns the deliberate acts of violence against the personnel of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia and of the collective peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States, including the continued laying of mines, which also endangers the civilian population and impedes the work of the humanitarian organizations. The Council demands that both sides take determined and prompt measures to put a stop to such acts,

⁶¹ S/PRST/1998/34.

which subvert the peace process, and to ensure that the security environment of all international personnel improves significantly.

The Council welcomes the efforts of the Secretary-General aimed at improving the security of the Mission, approves his proposal to increase the number of internationally recruited lightly-armed security personnel and additional local security personnel to provide internal security to the installations of the Mission, and requests the Secretary-General to keep the security of the Mission under constant review, taking into account the observations contained in his report.

The Council reminds both sides that the continued commitment of the international community to assist them depends on their progress in achieving peacefully a comprehensive political settlement.

**Decision of 28 January 1999 (3972nd meeting):
resolution 1225 (1999)**

On 20 January 1999, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1187 (1998), the Secretary-General submitted to the Council a report on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia and an update on operations of UNOMIG.⁶² In his report, the Secretary-General stated that, while the political process towards a settlement had been slow and at times had seemed to be almost blocked, UNOMIG had continued to carry out its mandate, thus contributing to lessening tensions on the ground, preventing an exacerbation of potentially serious incidents and providing a climate in which substantive negotiations could take place on the political level. Measures taken by the Mission had resulted in a situation in which UNOMIG military observers had been able to conduct limited patrolling without serious security incidents during the last three months. He cautioned that, for a return to previous patrolling patterns to happen, the two sides needed to take substantive and tangible measures to curb criminal and terrorist activities. He also stated that the recent intensification of activities related to the peace process had highlighted the need for a strengthening of the civilian component of the Mission, particularly in the field of political and civil affairs and public information. Given that UNOMIG remained indispensable for maintaining a situation conducive to the search for a political settlement of the conflict, he recommended that the Security Council extend the mandate of the Mission for a further six months until 31 July 1999.

⁶² S/1999/60.

At its 3972nd meeting, held on 28 January 1999 in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations, the Security Council included the report of the Secretary-General in its agenda. Following the adoption of the agenda, the President (Brazil), with the consent of the Council, invited the representatives of Georgia and Germany, at their request, to participate in the discussion without the right to vote. The President then drew the attention of the Council to a draft resolution submitted by France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States.⁶³ The President also drew the attention of the Council to a letter dated 25 January 1999 from the representative of Georgia addressed to the President of the Security Council, transmitting a letter dated 22 January 1999 from the President of Georgia addressed to the Security Council, outlining the position of Georgia and giving their recommendations on UNOMIG.⁶⁴

At the same meeting, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Georgia stated that despite the “pretended lull”, the situation in the region was getting worse in all aspects. The political, socio-economic and criminal situations were catastrophic. Despite the efforts of Georgia, the living conditions of the refugees and displaced persons were nothing less than tragic. All of those factors increased tension in the country and threatened the peace and security of the whole Caucasus region. He informed the Council that since the events of May 1998, the extermination of the Georgian population and violence against the returnees in Abkhazia, particularly in the Gali region, had not ended and the punitive operations by the “so-called Abkhaz militia” were ongoing. Moreover, during that period, the Abkhaz side had employed all the power in its hands to stall the process of the return of the refugees and displaced persons to their homes and had violated every article of the May 1998 Protocol in that regard. He expressed his country’s belief that the time had come for the Security Council to seriously consider the question of the ethnic cleansing committed by the Abkhaz side against the Georgian population. The international community also needed to warn the Abkhaz side that further attempts to obstruct the return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes would be viewed as a continuation of the

policy of ethnic cleansing and might well prompt the Security Council to employ relevant articles of the Charter of the United Nations and bring those responsible to justice. Expressing grave concern at the security conditions in the conflict zone, he stressed that, under its current mandate, the peacekeeping operation of the CIS had exhausted itself, and the Georgian side was opposed to the extension of the mandate unless it reflected the realistic objectives provided in the decisions of the numerous summits of the CIS. He also stated that, due to the lack of proper security conditions, UNOMIG was also failing to discharge its functions fully. He reiterated that Georgia had always supported the deployment of a self-protection unit in the zone and that the realities indicated that UNOMIG could not function adequately without one. He maintained that, under the circumstances, the United Nations could not limit itself to just reaffirming the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, but needed to elaborate proposals for a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia and submit them to the parties for consideration. He expressed his belief that the Security Council needed to reaffirm the rights of all refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes; take note of the decisions adopted at the December 1998 OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Oslo, which offered principal provisions with regard to the conflict settlement in Abkhazia; welcome bilateral dialogue between parties; and express readiness to promote the region’s economic rehabilitation, in accordance with the progress reached in the peace process. He also stressed that effective monitoring of the CIS peacekeeping operation needed to become one of the most important criteria for the activities of UNOMIG.⁶⁵

At the same meeting, the draft resolution was put to the vote and adopted unanimously as resolution 1225 (1999), which reads:

The Security Council,

Recalling all its relevant resolutions, in particular resolution 1187 (1998) of 30 July 1998, and the statement by its President of 25 November 1998,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General of 20 January 1999,

Noting the letter dated 22 January 1999 from the President of Georgia to the President of the Security Council,

⁶³ S/1999/79.

⁶⁴ S/1999/71.

⁶⁵ S/PV.3972, pp. 2-4.

Deeply concerned at the continuing tense and unstable situation in the conflict zone and at the risk of resumed fighting,

Deeply concerned also at the continued deadlock in achieving a comprehensive settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia,

Welcoming, in this context, the contribution that the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia and the collective peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States have made to stabilizing the situation in the zone of conflict, noting that the working relationship between the Mission and the collective peacekeeping force has been good at all levels, and stressing the importance of continued close cooperation and coordination between them in the performance of their respective mandates,

Recalling the conclusions of the Lisbon summit of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe regarding the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia,

Reaffirming the necessity for the parties strictly to respect human rights, expressing its support for the efforts of the Secretary-General to find ways to improve their observance as an integral part of the work towards a comprehensive political settlement, and noting developments in the work of the United Nations Human Rights Office in Abkhazia, Georgia,

1. *Welcomes* the report of the Secretary-General of 20 January 1999;

2. *Expresses its concern* at the failure of the parties to conclude, after bilateral contacts and the Athens meeting of 16 to 18 October 1998 on confidence-building measures, agreements on security and the non-use of force, the return of refugees and displaced persons and economic reconstruction, and urges the parties to resume bilateral negotiations to this end;

3. *Demands* that both sides widen their commitment to the United Nations-led peace process, continue to seek and engage in dialogue, expand their contacts at all levels and display without delay the necessary will to achieve substantial results on the key issues of the negotiations, and underlines the necessity for the parties to achieve an early and comprehensive political settlement, which includes a settlement on the political status of Abkhazia within the State of Georgia, which fully respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders;

4. *Emphasizes*, in this context, that the readiness and ability of the international community to assist the parties depend on their political will to resolve the conflict through dialogue and mutual accommodation and on their acting in good faith to implement promptly concrete measures towards bringing about a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict;

5. *Strongly supports* the sustained efforts made by the Secretary-General and his Special Representative with the assistance of the Russian Federation, in its capacity as facilitator, as well as of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in

Europe, to prevent hostilities and to give a new impetus to the negotiations within the United Nations-led peace process in order to achieve a comprehensive political settlement, and welcomes, in this context, the intention of the Secretary-General to propose a strengthening of the civilian component of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia;

6. *Demands* that both sides observe strictly the Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces, signed in Moscow on 14 May 1994, and all their obligations to refrain from the use of force and to resolve disputed issues by peaceful means only, and calls upon them to display greater resolve and willingness to make the Joint Investigation Group functional;

7. *Expresses its continuing concern* at the situation of refugees and displaced persons, resulting most recently from the hostilities of May 1998, reaffirms the unacceptability of the demographic changes resulting from the conflict and the imprescriptible right of all refugees and displaced persons affected by the conflict to return to their homes in secure conditions in accordance with international law and as set out in the Quadripartite Agreement on the Voluntary Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons, of 4 April 1994, and calls upon the parties to address this issue urgently by agreeing and implementing effective measures to guarantee the security of those who exercise their unconditional right to return;

8. *Welcomes*, in this context, the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to facilitate, as a first step, the safe return of refugees and displaced persons to the Gali region, and calls upon the parties to resume and intensify their bilateral dialogue to this end;

9. *Condemns* the activities by armed groups, including the continued laying of mines, which endanger the civilian population, impede the work of the humanitarian organizations and seriously delay the normalization of the situation in the Gali region, and deplores the lack of serious efforts by the parties to bring an end to those activities;

10. *Reiterates its demand* that both sides take immediate and determined measures to put a stop to such acts and ensure that the security environment of all international personnel improves significantly, and welcomes the first steps taken in this regard;

11. *Reiterates* its deep concern regarding the security of the Mission, welcomes the implementation of measures in this regard, and requests the Secretary-General to keep the security of the Mission under constant review;

12. *Decides* to extend the mandate of the Mission for a new period terminating on 31 July 1999, subject to a review by the Council of the mandate of the Mission in the event of any changes that may be made in the mandate or in the presence of the collective peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States;

13. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to keep the Council regularly informed and to report after three months

from the date of the adoption of the present resolution on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia;

14. *Expresses its intention* to conduct a thorough review of the operation at the end of its current mandate, in the light of steps taken by the parties to achieve a comprehensive settlement;

15. *Decides* to remain actively seized of the matter.

**Decision of 7 May 1999 (3997th meeting):
statement by the President**

On 21 April 1999, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1225 (1999), the Secretary-General submitted to the Council a report on the situation in Abkhazia and an update on UNOMIG.⁶⁶ In his report, the Secretary-General informed the Council that a valuable opportunity to take a step forward in the peace process had been missed due to the failure to reach agreement in January 1999 on the terms for the return of refugees and measures for economic rehabilitation. Over the past three months it had taken all the diligence of the military and political staff of UNOMIG to preserve and slightly improve on the lessening of tension in the area of responsibility of the Mission that had resulted from the 21 December 1998 meeting in Gali. However, the situation was not yet such that the operational restrictions imposed on the Mission in February 1998 could be lifted or that some or all of the team bases could be reopened. The Secretary-General stressed that a further improvement of the security situation, based on tangible measures by the two sides, would be required before UNOMIG was able to return to its pre-February 1998 operational pattern and, in that way, increase its presence in all parts of its area of responsibility. Only then would UNOMIG be able to fully implement the mandate entrusted to it by the Security Council. He stated that two specific actions by the parties would significantly help to improve the situation on the ground: the full separation of forces from the ceasefire line and the establishment of a joint investigation mechanism.

At its 3997th meeting, held on 7 May 1999 in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations, the Security Council included the report of the Secretary-General in its agenda. Following the adoption of the agenda, the President (Gabon) then drew the attention of the Council to a letter dated

⁶⁶ S/1999/460.

6 April 1999 from the representative of the Russian Federation addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting the text of a decision on further measures to settle the conflict in Abkhazia, adopted in Moscow on 2 April 1999 by the Council of Heads of State of the CIS.⁶⁷

At the same meeting, the President made the following statement on behalf of the Council:⁶⁸

The Security Council has considered the report of the Secretary-General of 21 April 1999 concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia.

The Council reiterates its demand that both sides widen their commitment to the United Nations-led peace process, continue to seek and engage in dialogue, expand their bilateral contacts and display without delay the necessary will to achieve substantial results on the key issues of the negotiations, and underlines the necessity for the parties to achieve an early and comprehensive political settlement, which includes a settlement on the political status of Abkhazia within the State of Georgia, which fully respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders.

The Council reaffirms the unacceptability of the demographic changes resulting from the conflict and the imprescriptible right of all refugees and displaced persons affected by the conflict to return to their homes in secure conditions, and calls upon the parties to address this issue urgently by agreeing and implementing effective measures to guarantee the security of those who exercise their unconditional right to return.

The Council welcomes in this context the decision of the Council of Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States of 2 April 1999 on further measures to settle the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia. The Council notes the conclusions of the eighth session of the Coordinating Council of the Georgian and Abkhaz sides held on 29 April 1999.

The Council expresses its deep concern at the failure of the parties to reach an agreement on the terms for the return of refugees and displaced persons to the Gali region and measures for economic rehabilitation. The Council stresses the need for them to conclude urgently such an agreement, which would make it possible for the international community to participate in this effort, as well as an agreement on peace and guarantees for the prevention of armed confrontation.

The Council welcomes the improvements in the security situation, but notes that the general situation in the conflict zone still remains tense and unstable.

⁶⁷ S/1999/392.

⁶⁸ S/PRST/1999/11.

The Council urges the parties to exercise great restraint in their responses to any incidents arising on the ground and to take concrete steps to improve their cooperation in this field. The Council demands that both sides take immediate and determined measures to put a stop to the activities by armed groups, including the continued laying of mines, and to establish a climate of confidence allowing refugees and displaced persons to return. The Council further demands that both sides ensure a full separation of forces from the ceasefire line, in accordance with the ceasefire protocol signed on 25 May 1998, and establish a joint investigation mechanism without further delay.

The Council welcomes the continued contribution that the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia and the collective peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States have made to stabilizing the situation in the zone of conflict and notes that the working relationship between the Mission and the collective peacekeeping force has remained good.

The Council reaffirms the importance it attaches to the security of the Mission and of all international personnel and recalls the obligations of both sides in this regard. The Council welcomes the steps taken to enhance the operations and security of the Mission.

The Council strongly supports the sustained efforts made by the Secretary-General and his Special Representative with the assistance of the Russian Federation, in its capacity as facilitator, as well as of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to prevent hostilities, to protect human rights and to advance a settlement.

**Decision of 30 July 1999 (4029th meeting):
resolution 1255 (1999)**

On 20 July 1999, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1225 (1999), the Secretary-General submitted to the Council a report on the situation in Abkhazia, and an update on UNOMIG.⁶⁹ In his report, the Secretary-General stated that, while achieving progress in the negotiations process aimed at the comprehensive settlement of the conflict remained difficult, contacts between the sides had continued to grow. At the same time, the key issues of the settlement process remained unresolved. He informed the Council that in the security field, the recent improvements in the security situation along the line of separation of forces and the efforts of both sides to produce those improvements were noted with approval, but the full separation of forces remained to be accomplished. Noting that UNOMIG continued to play an essential role in the stabilization of the situation in Abkhazia,

⁶⁹ S/1999/805.

Georgia, the Secretary-General recommended that the Security Council extend the mandate of UNOMIG for a further six-month period, ending on 31 January 2000.

At its 4029th meeting, held on 30 July 1999 in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations, the Security Council included the report of the Secretary-General in its agenda. Following the adoption of the agenda, the President (Malaysia), with the consent of the Council, invited the representatives of Georgia and Germany, at their request, to participate in the discussion without the right to vote. The President then drew the attention of the Council to a draft resolution prepared in the course of the Council's prior consultations.⁷⁰ The President also drew the attention of the Council to letters dated 19, 22 and 22 July 1999, respectively, from the representative of Georgia addressed to the President of the Security Council;⁷¹ and a letter dated 21 July 1999 from the representative of Georgia to the Secretary-General, transmitting a number of documents and statements relating to the situation in Abkhazia.⁷²

At the same meeting, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Georgia stated that the peace process was stalled, and that despite his country's joint efforts there had been no tangible progress in the course of negotiations that could break the existing impasse. He stated that the time had come for the Security Council to clearly point to the unacceptability of the stagnation and to categorically urge the Abkhaz side to take constructive action. He maintained that the Council needed to recall the decisions of the Budapest and Lisbon summits of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and to stress that obstruction of the return of the refugees and displaced persons was nothing but a continuation of the policy of ethnic cleansing. That provision would trigger adequate action on the part of the Council, in line with the spirit and the letter of the Charter of the United Nations. He also stated that the decision of the Abkhaz authorities to hold "so-called presidential elections" in the autumn of 1999 was one more attempt to establish the demographic changes resulting from the conflict, and he expressed his belief that the Council needed to severely condemn the intention of the Abkhaz side to hold such "elections", declare it unlawful and strictly

⁷⁰ S/1999/832.

⁷¹ S/1999/801, S/1999/813 and S/1999/814.

⁷² S/1999/509.

warn the Abkhaz authorities that such action might damage the peace process. He reiterated the support of Georgia for the idea of introducing a self-protection unit into the conflict zone and stated that he thought that the Council should require the Secretary-General to resume consultations on the proposal for the unit set out in his 11 May 1998 report. He also emphasized that the future of the CIS peacekeeping operation remained a problem, and that Georgia believed that the CIS peacekeeping operation would be fully functional only after the implementation of the principal decisions adopted at the recent summits of the CIS. Unfortunately, the Abkhaz side was blocking the fulfilment of those decisions, leaving the CIS peacekeepers in the conflict zone with an expired mandate. Finally, he expressed his country's disappointment that cooperation between the United Nations and OSCE on resolving the conflict was still lagging. He suggested that the Security Council stress the importance of the decision adopted at the Oslo Ministerial meeting of OSCE in December 1998, which provided fundamental provisions with regard to the comprehensive political settlement of the conflict and which constituted a programme for the promotion of the cooperation between the United Nations and OSCE.⁷³

The representative of the Russian Federation expressed his country's concern at the lack of progress on key aspects of the settlement and noted that the most acute problem remained the return of refugees to the Gali region. He stressed that it was important that the parties demonstrate the necessary resolve and sign the document that they had "virtually agreed upon", which would open the way to resolving other settlement-related problems. He noted that the cooperation between the United Nations and CIS was taking place strictly on the basis of Chapter VIII of the Charter and that the activities of the CIS peacekeeping forces were backed by the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, which had repeatedly welcomed their important contribution in helping to stabilize the situation in the conflict zone. He pointed out that, while his delegation attached great importance to the question of security in the area of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, the situation in the region had improved, although it remained fragile. The representative informed the Council that his Government had taken

⁷³ S/PV.4029, pp. 4-5.

steps to enhance the effectiveness of the CIS peacekeeping force in order to ensure the security of the international personnel of the United Nations.⁷⁴

Several speakers made statements reiterating the necessity of a peaceful settlement based on the territorial integrity of Georgia. They expressed concern over the refugee situation and called on parties to reach a credible agreement. Regarding the security situation, some speakers called on both sides to prevent further incidents. The representatives of France and Argentina stated that the elections planned in Abkhazia needed to be regarded as illegitimate.⁷⁵

At the same meeting, the draft resolution was put to the vote and adopted unanimously as resolution 1255 (1999), which reads:

The Security Council,

Recalling all its relevant resolutions, in particular resolution 1225 (1999) of 28 January 1999, and the statement by its President of 7 May 1999,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General of 20 July 1999,

Taking note of the letter dated 19 July 1999 from the President of Georgia to the Secretary-General,

Stressing that, notwithstanding positive developments on some issues, the lack of progress on key issues of a comprehensive settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, is unacceptable,

Deeply concerned at the continuing volatile situation in the conflict zone, welcoming in this regard the important contributions that the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia and the collective peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States continue to make in stabilizing the situation in the zone of conflict, noting that the working relationship between the Mission and the collective peacekeeping force has been good at all levels, and stressing the importance of continuing and increasing close cooperation and coordination between them in the performance of their respective mandates,

Recalling the conclusions of the Lisbon summit of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe regarding the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia,

Reaffirming the necessity for the parties strictly to respect human rights, and expressing its support for the efforts of the

⁷⁴ pp. 6-7.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6 (Germany); p. 7 (United Kingdom); p. 8 (France); p. 8 (United States); p. 9 (China); and pp. 9-10 (Argentina).

Secretary-General to find ways to improve their observance as an integral part of the work towards a comprehensive political settlement,

1. *Welcomes* the report of the Secretary-General of 20 July 1999;

2. *Demands* that the parties to the conflict widen and deepen their commitment to the United Nations-led peace process, continue to expand their dialogue and contacts at all levels and display without delay the necessary will to achieve substantial results on the key issues of the negotiations;

3. *Strongly supports* the sustained efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative with the assistance of the Russian Federation, in its capacity as facilitator, as well as of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to promote the stabilization of the situation and to give new impetus to the negotiations within the United Nations-led peace process in order to achieve a comprehensive political settlement, and commends the tireless efforts of the retiring Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Liviu Bota, in carrying out his mandate;

4. *Emphasizes*, in this context, that the readiness and ability of the international community to assist the parties depend on their political will to resolve the conflict through dialogue and mutual accommodation and on their acting in good faith to implement promptly concrete measures towards bringing about a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict;

5. *Underlines* the necessity for the parties to achieve an early and comprehensive political settlement, which includes a settlement on the political status of Abkhazia within the State of Georgia, which fully respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders, and supports the intention of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, in close cooperation with the Russian Federation, in its capacity as facilitator, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General, to continue to submit proposals for the consideration of the parties on the distribution of constitutional competences between Tbilisi and Sukhumi as part of a comprehensive settlement;

6. *Considers* the holding of self-styled elections in Abkhazia, Georgia, unacceptable and illegitimate;

7. *Expresses* its continuing concern at the situation of refugees and displaced persons, resulting, in particular, from the hostilities of May 1998, reaffirms the unacceptability of the demographic changes resulting from the conflict and the imprescriptible right of all refugees and displaced persons affected by the conflict to return to their homes in secure conditions in accordance with international law and as set out in the Quadripartite Agreement on the Voluntary Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons, of 4 April 1994, and calls upon the parties to address this issue urgently by agreeing and implementing effective measures to guarantee the security of those who exercise their unconditional right to return;

8. *Welcomes*, in this context, the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to facilitate, as a first step, the safe return of refugees and displaced persons to the Gali region, and emphasizes, in this regard, that the lasting return of the refugees cannot be ensured without concrete results from the bilateral dialogue between the parties, which produce the necessary security and legal guarantees;

9. *Takes note with appreciation* of the agreements reached at the meetings of 16 to 18 October 1998 and 7 to 9 June 1999, hosted respectively by the Governments of Greece and Turkey, aimed at building confidence, improving security and developing cooperation, and calls upon the parties to enhance their efforts to implement those decisions in an effective and comprehensive manner, notably at the prospective meeting in Yalta at the invitation of the Government of Ukraine;

10. *Demands* that both sides observe strictly the Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces, signed in Moscow on 14 May 1994, and takes note with appreciation, in this context, of the substantial progress reported towards setting up a joint investigation mechanism for violations of the Agreement, as well as of the greater restraint exercised by the parties along the line of separation of forces;

11. *Condemns* the ongoing activities by armed groups, which endanger the civilian population, impede the work of the humanitarian organizations and seriously delay the normalization of the situation in the Gali region, reiterates its concern regarding the security of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia, welcomes the implementation of measures in this regard, and requests the Secretary-General to keep the security of the Mission under constant review;

12. *Decides* to extend the mandate of the Mission for a new period terminating on 31 January 2000, subject to a review by the Council of the mandate of the Mission in the event of any changes that may be made in the mandate or in the presence of the collective peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States;

13. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to keep the Council regularly informed and to report three months from the date of the adoption of the present resolution on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia;

14. *Expresses its intention* to conduct a thorough review of the operation at the end of its current mandate, in the light of steps taken by the parties to achieve a comprehensive settlement;

15. *Decides* to remain actively seized of the matter.

Decision of 12 November 1999 (4065th meeting): statement by the President

On 22 October 1999, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1255 (1999), the Secretary-General

submitted to the Council a report on the situation in Abkhazia and an update on UNOMIG.⁷⁶ In his report, the Secretary-General welcomed the acceleration of bilateral contacts at all levels between the Georgian and Abkhaz sides. He reiterated that the Georgian and Abkhaz sides needed to take the first concrete step towards the full return of refugees and internally displaced persons. While the security situation had slightly improved in the Gali and Zugdidi sectors and the number of incidents had decreased, the hostage-taking incident of 13 October 1999 had once again shown the precariousness of the situation in which UNOMIG operated. He stressed that UNOMIG was keeping its security arrangement under constant review in order to ensure the highest possible level of security for its staff.

At its 4065th meeting, held on 12 November 1999 in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations, the Security Council included the report of the Secretary-General in its agenda. Following the adoption of the agenda, the President (Slovenia), with the consent of the Council, invited the representative of Georgia, at his request, to participate in the discussion without the right to vote.

At the same meeting, the President made the following statement on behalf of the Council:⁷⁷

The Security Council has considered the report of the Secretary-General of 22 October 1999 concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia.

The Council warmly welcomes the appointment of Mr. Dieter Boden as resident Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and hopes the parties will see this as an opportune moment to give renewed impetus to the search for a political settlement.

The Council welcomes the acceleration of bilateral contacts at all levels between the Georgian and Abkhaz sides and calls upon them to continue to expand their contacts.

The Council notes with grave concern that, notwithstanding positive developments on some issues, no progress has been made on the key issues of the settlement, particularly the core issue of the status of Abkhazia, Georgia. The Council therefore strongly supports the intention of the Special Representative to submit as soon as possible further

proposals to both sides on the distribution of constitutional competences between Tbilisi and Sukhumi, as part of a comprehensive settlement, with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders, working in close cooperation with the Russian Federation, in its capacity as facilitator, the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The Council reiterates its demand that the parties to the conflict widen and deepen their commitment to the United Nations-led peace process, in particular by resuming regular meetings of the Coordinating Council and of its working groups, and agrees with the Secretary-General that they must continue to meet regularly, regardless of the constraints of domestic politics. The Council calls upon the parties to agree upon and to take, in the nearest future, the first concrete steps towards the full return to Abkhazia, Georgia, of refugees and internally displaced persons in safe, secure and dignified conditions. The Council reminds the parties that this would enable the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to provide substantial material assistance. The Council reiterates its view on the unacceptability of any action by the Abkhaz leadership in contravention of the principles of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia.

The Council notes with satisfaction that the security situation has improved slightly, in particular in the reduction of tension along the line of separation of forces, while noting the persistent precariousness of the security of United Nations personnel. The Council reiterates its condemnation of the hostage-taking of seven United Nations personnel on 13 October 1999, welcomes the release of the hostages, and stresses that the perpetrators of this unacceptable act should be brought to justice. The Council welcomes the fact that the United Nations Observer Mission is keeping its security arrangements under constant review in order to ensure the highest possible level of security for its staff.

The Council pays tribute to Mr. Liviu Bota for his valuable work while serving as Special Representative of the Secretary-General. The Council welcomes the important contributions that the Mission and the collective peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States continue to make in stabilizing the situation in the zone of conflict, notes that the working relationship between the Mission and the collective peacekeeping force has been good at all levels, and stresses the importance of continuing and increasing close cooperation and coordination between them in the performance of their respective mandates.

⁷⁶ S/1999/1087.

⁷⁷ S/PRST/1999/30.