Roundtable Seminar

Conflicts in the South Caucasus:
Political, Security and Development Challenges

Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, Tbilisi

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The Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (Tbilisi)

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and

Conciliation Resources (London)
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INTRODUCTION

Denis Corboy, Director, Caucasus Policy Institute, King’s College London:

Mr Prime Minister, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends, I would like to welcome you on behalf of the London side of this project.

This is a joint project between the Caucasus Policy Institute at King’s College, the Royal Institute of International Affairs at Chatham House, and Conciliation Resources. We are very grateful to our host, the Georgian Foundation.

Also participating from London, we have the International Institute for Strategic Studies and the London School of Economics. I have to comment that in London we have perhaps the largest number of policy experts and academics working on the Caucasus of anywhere. It is a critical mass situation, and this event here demonstrates very well that we can and do all work together. This is a very positive thing. It is a great pleasure to have the Georgian Foundation as a partner.

The seminar is a continuation of work that has been going on for roughly eight months now, a continuation of a similar seminar that was conducted in London in April. The purpose is to examine the regional conflicts in a wider framework and to take a fresh look at them in the light of recent developments. How have these impacted on the conflicts, strategically, politically and economically? In the region, changes in Georgia have been dramatic. As the Prime Minister must know, having democratic elections is the easy bit. The difficult bit is starting only now: good governance, economic development and creating a successful business model. This conference also takes place as a new international dimension comes into being: not just stronger US interest in the region, but, one hopes, a continuing EU policy, or a soft policy of the EU, which has been an enormous success in Eastern Europe. We hope to see it developed and extended in this part of Europe as well through the neighbourhood policy.

There is a change in Russia’s attitude in the region, both positive and negative. On the positive side, we have to point to the BASIS agreement. But there are also some negatives. What we intend to do at the end is to produce a report and draw conclusions. One final remark: our work is happening in London among friends. I hope that we can build on this and the contacts that have been created through this project. Thank you very much.

Ambassador Alex Rondelli, President, Georgian Foundation for Strategic International Studies:
Welcome to our new facilities! We in the Foundation are happy to have such an interesting gathering of people here. You are always welcome here. We believe that hosting this conference is very important for our region. Unfortunately, so far the use of force has prevailed and the political solution seemed never near, but I think that meetings like this, and our joint efforts, make a better job and bring us nearer to a political solution. At least now more and more people understand that the use of force is useless. Conflict resolution is probably becoming one of the most important topics in our current agenda in the region.

So once more welcome! We will try to make your work here both pleasant and useful. These two words the most important, perhaps, when a host is addressing the guests. Thank you!

I would like to ask the Prime Minister of Georgia to open our seminar. Prime Minister.

OPENING REMARKS

Zurab Noghaideili, Prime Minister of Georgia:

Thank you, Denis. Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to welcome you to Tbilisi and to Georgia. It is a special pleasure for me to make these opening remarks at the request of the Caucasus Policy Institute and the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies. It is not only symbolic that my statement today follows up the address delivered by my predecessor and friend – the late Zurab Zhvania -- at the very first meeting of the Caucasus Policy Institute eight months ago. As a proponent of new and creative approaches, it is my wish too to support the Institute together with the Georgian Foundation to become generators of fresh and constructive ideas on meeting and overcoming the challenges faced by the south Caucasus region. The winds of change currently affecting the south Caucasus have been brought about by the Rose Revolution. Today Georgia is a vibrant pluralist country identified by President Bush as the beacon of democracy, an example around the world of successful democratic transformation -- in terms of the rule of law, human rights, legitimacy through participation, and the creation of an environment of peace and security. It has deep implications for conflict settlement as well, since democracy, importantly, also operates as a conflict management system without recourse to violence, in which conflicting interests are restrained, not suppressed.

The frozen conflicts are themselves the antithesis of democracy, often epitomized by totalitarian structures, militarization, terrorism, violation of human rights, contraband arms and drugs smuggling. Moreover, they leave a negative imprint on the economic development of the conflict regions of Georgia and hamper regional cooperation in South Caucasus. The border areas are especially volatile, since conflicts result in a temporary decline of the central legal authority; and as for the existing authorities in conflict zones, they are either unable or unwilling to eradicate illegal activities. Let me reiterate here that by virtue of making a strong case for democratic transformation we are aspiring to provide an example of peaceful conflict resolution.

As Mr Rondeli has mentioned, the conflicts have taken a heavy human and material toll from the peoples of Georgia. We are convinced that the political, security and
development challenges caused both internally and externally by these conflicts can be effectively addressed through the advancement of democracy. In a partnership between civil society and government, by strengthening the rule of law and ensuring human rights, by macroeconomic stabilization, far-reaching economic reforms and a more extensive programme of privatization, Georgia can become an attractive environment for living and doing business.

In this context I would like to note that the series of reforms that have been implemented by the Georgian government since the beginning of 2004 have already resulted in the establishment of financial order, macroeconomic stability and fiscal improvement. The government is fully conscious that democracy attains its real meaning where strong institutions operate in a coherent and mutually reinforcing way. As Denis has mentioned, elections are only the beginning. This challenge also relates to state institutions and bodies mandated or involved in conflict resolution. Perhaps we have to think of how to streamline the work by improving coordination and making these bodies run as an integrated mechanism capable of addressing the cross-sectoral aspects of conflict resolution.

With all these factors in mind, I would like to make several points that illustrate the strategy articulated by the President of Georgia: the demilitarization and decriminalization of the frozen conflicts, and the establishment of local security as an imperative for serving the interests of the Georgian people. For more than a decade I have lived in uncertainty and constant fear, lacking a clear perspective for the future; therefore, establishing peace and order is a prerequisite for transforming the confrontational environment in the zones of conflict to one of cooperation and trust. It will also contribute to the creation of the necessary security conditions for the return of IDPs and refugees. The need for such measures has been highlighted by recent events in the Tskhinvali region. Economic cooperation, demilitarization and decriminalization should go hand in hand with confidence-building measures, including the implementation of joint economic projects. These projects, involving populations in conflict zones as well as returned IDPs, will have manifold effects, such as the restoration of the economy in conflict zones, and the encouragement of human contact through joint business activities, thus facilitating conciliation. It is important that effects of this project benefit the whole population of conflict zones and are not used for financing certain segments. This presupposes the introduction of elements of accountability, transparency and control. This kind of arrangement has also a security dimension, since it enables the parties to mobilize their forces against the threat of terrorism and transnational crime.

In this connection, the implementation of regional projects, including transportation and energy corridors to benefit all the stakeholders in the development and stability of the south Caucasus region, is vital if a favorable environment for the settlement of the conflict is to be created. Guarantees and autonomy must be given: the government of Georgia is ready to address the legitimate interests of Abkhazians and Ossetians -- for their development, preservation of identity, protection of culture and language, general council, and meaningful representation in the national government -- by offering the broader form of autonomy ensured by firm guarantees. For this purpose, cooperation with the Venice commission will continue to work on the initiative of President, which lays down the elements for defining the status of Tskhinvali. As Prime Minister, I am committed to use all avenues for meaningful and direct dialogue with de facto leaders of the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions, in order to explore the opportunities for conflict resolution.

Finally, let me wish you a stimulating discussion, and I look forward to seeing the policy recommendations of the conference. Thank you very much.
Panel I: POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES AND CONFLICTS

Alexander Russetsky, Director, The South Caucasus Institute of Regional Security, Tbilisi

Ladies and gentlemen, I am representing the South Caucasus Institute of Regional Security, a small think-tank that works in this region with the aim of creating the conditions needed for stable and strong development of the South Caucasus. It is a great honour to be practically the first speaker in this conference.

I would like to give my opinion about the problems that exist in our region from the viewpoint of current conflicts, and the first problem to which I would like to draw your attention is the inadequate understanding of these conflicts here. There are many conflicts and they are different from each other. People often single out the Abkhaz, Karabakh and South Ossetian conflicts as the dominant ones. However, if we approach these conflicts from the standpoint of the wider inter-state situation, we can see that the reality that exists in them is represented by the Armenian-Azerbaijan (the Nagorno-Karabakh problem) and Georgian-Russian (the Abkhaz and South Ossetian problems) conflicts. I think we have the right to underline these two conflicts and to argue that they are actually inter-state conflicts in the region.

The legalization of the second conflict, the Georgian-Russian, has the highest priority. If Georgian-Russian relations are not legalized as being an inter-state conflict, the situation will move forward in the same way as previously and we will arrive at the same results as before. If carried to its logical conclusion, this scenario would ultimately lead to Russia becoming a party to the conflict. Because of this, Russia would not be able to have the status of a mediator in these conflicts. It is indeed a paradox that one side is both a party to the conflict and a mediator. Many experts have drawn attention to this fact but it has not been registered in any documents. I think that the international community, and whoever would like to see an end of these conflicts, must first and foremost assess them accurately. When it comes to accurate assessment, many international organizations, intellectual groups, analytical groups and other experts have examined the conflict, but there is not one common international assessment of its nature and components.

So, at an international level, we invest a lot of money and resources in a process that has not been adequately analysed. Very often, existing conflicts are named ethnic conflicts and people understand them as such. For example, Georgians and Ossetians are thought of as two distinct ethnicities. This is a completely inadequate understanding. Ossetian society, as found in the Caucasus, is divided into many parts, which have different features. Generalization of these conflicts as ethnic conflicts is a serious mistake which, at a later stage, will result in inadequate formulations in discussions and negotiations. For example, the Georgian Ossetian conflict is sometimes characterized as consisting of four subjects: the central Georgian government, the South Ossetian separatists, representatives of North Ossetia, and Russia. This format of 3+1 creates an inadequate picture.

How do we propose to correct this faulty perception? To take a specific example, the area of the Tskhivalsky region is inhabited by two main ethnicities: Ethnic Ossetians and Georgians. There is another important group there, the mixed families, which are often not taken into account as subjects in these conflicts. When some groups in negotiations are represented and not others, it is a breach of democratic principles, and therefore entire social groups are being discriminated against. There will be a
conference in Batumi in the next few days, on 9 and 10 July, on Georgian-Ossetian problems. I was looking through the programme and was horrified to see that it was organized along the same lines. Thus the invitees were representatives of separatists and of organizations that work in these areas, and not one person had been invited to represent Georgian society in the region.

The same situation is true of the territory of Abkhazia. I think one of the main problems in this region is the legitimacy of the rulers. The problem concerns not only the government of the unrecognized entities, but also every other society and state that strives to legitimize its political regimes. One of the main political challenges nowadays is the creation of legitimate regimes in the whole of the region of the South Caucasus, especially the conflict zones. What do we mean when we say legitimate powers? We mean powers that represent the interests of all the groups that exist in the conflict zones. I would like to underline again that most of these groups are discriminated against, and unfortunately international organizations do not pay enough attention to this.

The last thing that I would like to say is related to the events on departure of Russian military bases from the territory of Georgia. I think all those optimistic reactions connected to what many experts call the reduction of Russian military presence in the region are premature. According to our information, there is an increased presence of unofficial armed groups in the conflict zones. This will help increase the number of representatives of special forces in destructive operations. Military presence, therefore, needs to be analysed in its full complexity. Until we recognize that military presence, whether military bases or peacekeeping forces (who, by the way, have no moral right to be there), is connected to armed groups in these territories, members of which are predominantly Russians, until the international community adequately evaluates that most security ministries are governed by Russian generals and officers, there will be no real change in this situation. Thank you for your attention.

**Stepan Safaryan, Director of Research, The Armenian Center for National and International Studies, Yerevan**

Thank you very much. I am honoured to be participating in this project and would like to thank you for inviting me. When I received the agenda for this seminar I tried to understand how the topic listed for Panel I – frozen conflicts – affected the development of democracy and effective governance in our region: in short, to identify the negative role played by conflicts in the process of democratic development.

In speaking about the channels through which conflicts have their impact on democracy development on our countries, I would like to single out three main channels. Foremost among them is post-communist colonial channels. Here the problem relates to the new great game that is evolving in our region. As Mr Corboy mentioned, the South Caucasus and surrounding regions have now assumed quite new dimensions. It has been apparent for a long time that Russia, the main successor of the USSR, has not overcome its ambition to be the dominant force in the region. As a policy analyst of the Heritage Foundation argues, Russian political elites have not discarded the imperialist ideology that inspired Soviet expansionism. The regimes of both Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin have aimed to control the post-Soviet space and reconstruct CIS as Russia’s neo-colony, an area in which the West has to recognize and respect Russia’s historical and traditional leadership. As
Sergey Lavrov, the Russian Foreign Minister expressed it recently: “In this term, the conflicts remain as key factors to influence the independent states.”

The second route through which conflicts have their impact on political development are the security services and channels. In this regard, Russia’s influence in our region is conditioned by military and security dimensions. Via this route the Russians maintain their influence on new democracies restarting their democratic development.

Third is the political agenda. I would like to focus on the coups d’état in Azerbaijan and in Armenia, in, respectively, in 1995 and 1998. The coup of June 1993, when Azerbaijan’s first president was overthrown by the former KGB chief and Politburo member General Heydar Aliyev, is less notable. Between 1993 and 1995 four unsuccessful coups have been attempted on Aliyev, reportedly with Moscow’s support. The coup in 1998 in Armenia was led by four statesmen: Robert Kocharyan, former President of NKR; the Prime Minister of Armenia; the former Minister for National Security; and Vazgen Sarkisyan, the former Minister of Defence and Minister of Defence of NKR. Later, Vazgen Sarkisyan, the main challenger of Robert Kocharyan in the 1998 elections and the Speaker of Parliament was killed in the Parliament building during the terrorist action of 27 October 1999.

The linkage between these two factors – namely, the political agenda, which is dictated by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and the security forces – is lent support by a recent statement made by Aleksandr Litvinenko, the former KGB official, that these terrorist acts were organized by the Russian security services in order to prevent the ongoing resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict during the November 1999 Istanbul Summit of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). So these three channels act together. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict clearly dictates the political agenda; and of course Nagorno-Karabakh is now the main issue to discuss during these power changes. The engagement of the security services in both cases is obvious. Two revolutions from the top were about the NKR issue, about how to serve and preserve Nagorno-Karabakh. But unfortunately they were legitimated by the so-called elections, and resulted in the legitimation of the power branches and the weakening of democratic institutions. Thus both Heydar Aliyev and Robert Kocharyan became presidents with a majority of the so-called popular vote.

A relevant factor in this context is the attitude of the international community towards these developments. Unfortunately, after these revolutions from the top, dictated by Russia and implemented by the security services, the attitude of the West was inconsistent. All the observation missions welcomed these changes and continued to welcome the next political developments – which were in effect non-democratic. The main channel to impact on democratic developments in the three South Ossetian states, of course, is the political dimension. As I already said, the next parliamentary and presidential elections, although they contained massive vote irregularities, were recognized by observation missions.

Up to today, all elections in the three states have been welcomed by CIS observation missions. However, the OSCE Warsaw-based Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODHR) observation mission concluded in its final report of elections conducted up to 2003 that in general they failed to meet the international and OSCE commitments and standards to which the countries had committed themselves. But they showed improvement in some respects and progress over the previous elections. So unfortunately, by welcoming the step-by-step democratization of our countries, and appearing to give their approval to a process that culminated in the
Georgian elections, the Western observation missions contributed to a situation whereby all the political systems of the South Caucasus Republics became authoritarian regimes. This is a serious problem for our democracies.

In contrast, I would like to draw attention to the ODHRD reports for Armenia’s 2003 elections, or Azerbaijan’s 2004 presidential elections, and Georgia’s 2003 parliamentary elections. These reports were totally critical without mentioning any progress, and this verdict brought its results. In the context of the falsified Georgian parliamentary elections of 2004, the international democratic community displayed an accurate joint reaction that the Georgian people and civil society were able to use in favour of Georgia.

So what happened in the case of Armenia? As I said, Western society welcomed the step-by-step democratization process up to the moment when it realized that the leaders of the newly independent states were wasting the sovereignty of their countries in order to keep power through bargaining with the Kremlin. It was troubling to hear the post-election statement of the Minister of Defence and Kocharyan’s campaign manager, who said that Europeans have their standards of democracy and Armenians have theirs. When they saw that the weakness of the authorities, combined with lack of legitimacy and public support, could lead to their joining with other presidents of CIS countries, they adopted a statement during the meeting of CIS Heads of State in Moscow on 3 July to the effect that OSCE does not respect such fundamental principles as non-interference in internal affairs and respect for national sovereignty. In short, the ODHR observers were guilty of double standards by focusing on certain states while ignoring problems in others. It appears that this primary activity of the ODHR is politicized and fails to take into account the specifics of individual countries.

Summing up these developments to date, I would like to say that of course Nagorno-Karabakh conflict caused a power change in Armenia, but that it also had its effect on the economic and democratic development of the country. But the Nagorno-Karabakh issue is not the main challenge to our democracy. The main challenge is the manipulation of this conflict by regional powers or superpowers and by the inconsistency of the West towards democratic development in our region.

As to the second point of our agenda: Is there a risk of destabilization and political violence in the region as a result of fraudulent elections being held? Well, this happened in Georgia, but similar developments had no success in Azerbaijan and Armenia. So I do not want to list the problems, but I would like to mention some factors that show the existence of crisis in our societies. In Armenia, it takes the form of boycotting the Armenian opposition. It is over two years since the Armenian opposition refused to participate in parliament. All decisions are adopted without taking into account the interests of a major part of society. So the crisis continues, and we can say that the fraudulent elections of 2003 caused a long-term crisis in Armenia and that the possibility of the destabilization of the internal political situation in Armenia cannot be ruled out. But they do not risk bringing about destabilization and political violence for the region as a whole or affecting the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. As for the conflict’s impact on democratic institution-building, we have to say that it has provided an economic system which is subservient to military goals. A further problem relates to the international community, which fails to react adequately to conflicting statements in the overall situation. Thus, for example, statements about the restoration of war, which we hear sometimes from Azerbaijan’s side, are followed by similar statements from Armenia, and this is one of the main problems that increase the risk of destabilization in our region.
What can be done to prevent the negative role of frozen conflicts, and to minimize the extent to which conflicts challenge democracies? As Mr Russetsky has already said, the first step is the democratization of the whole region. For this, international support is needed. Any attempt initiated within the regional society or by the authorities to radically democratize the political system is unlikely to succeed on its own, since visible and meaningful steps towards democratization and liberalization threaten the basis of non-democratic authorities. The second necessary condition is to establish more consistency among the authorities conducting reforms in the provision of basic political rights, especially in the fight against corruption.

It is necessary to boost the sovereignty of all units in the region, including giving more sovereignty to non-recognized states. Sovereignty is closely linked with democracy, since striving for this remains a precondition of democratic transition for all the units. It is further necessary to involve all the conflicting parties in the wider context of Europeanization processes, strengthening the irreversibility of the war, contributing to the conflict’s transformation and the regional society’s understanding of social, economic and political issues, and cultivating a democratic culture for conflict resolution. It is important to work separately with all parties that are trying to apply European multi-tier governance and achieve conflict resolution. EU direct financial democratization support for non-recognized republics would create a favourable context for conflict resolution. And finally it is necessary to avoid all statements and action that might alarm conflicting parties or minorities and thus complicate the situation in minority/majority relations. Thank you very much.

Hijran Huseynova, Professor in Political Sciences, Faculty of International Relations and Law, Baku University.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak. Mr Safaryan’s presentation has made a great impression on me and I have learnt a lot. If I did not have an Azerbaijan passport in my bag, I would have doubted some of his words. But I would still like to return to the theme on the agenda: the influence of frozen conflicts on the prevention of democratic processes in our countries. People have talked about this for a long time, and I think that even for a less educated person it will be clear that there is a party interested in maintaining the stagnant conflict. It is in those people’s interest from many points of view regardless of the country in question. It is very comfortable to manipulate the masses of troubled people, who do not know what happens in reality.

The collapse of the USSR and events that have taken place in our countries, and transformations based on these events, have left a deep impact, and in reality when you talk to people, you realize that they do not know why and how it all happened. But I think the question about manipulation of people can be applied both to the government and to the opposition, because, I can say for my own country, both sides appeal to people and both sides use this mechanism. But, at the same time, both government and opposition are trying to introduce changes to the way they work. If for example, the main criticism of the opposition to the government is addressed not only to the government but to a group of governmental departments – about, say, how there is no transparency in these organisations -- these criticisms are most often taken personally as an insult by people who are in the government or in pro-governmental organisations. It gets into the press, and a show is created, which everyone watches.
At these times, all of us, I believe, will have watched ministers reporting to the TV audiences and press conferences. Most ministers, when making these reports, refer to the occupation of the territories, how there is a problem with refugees and so on. It is reality and is true, and in these modern political conditions, not only in Azerbaijan but also in the whole of the South Caucasus, this factor needs to be taken into account. By the way, to be objective, I have to mention that this question is always central to the thinking of the Republic’s government, and all foreign political events on a national level are in some way or other connected with the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Both the government and the opposition regard this conflict either as a reason for all things going wrong in the country or as a weapon in an internal political fight. Despite this, both sides understand, but for some unexplained reason choose not mention, the certain truth that without consolidation of the whole of society and the coordination of both the government and the opposition, it is impossible to resolve the conflict. There is no constructive dialogue between the government and the opposition, nor is there any planning. All proposals to start a dialogue and have a national agreement, in the interest of national aims, have a more declamatory character.

It is interesting to consider the population of the country. These are the potential voters, and in the majority they are apathetic. They look at these political events with no interest. At best, only extravagant activities on the part of pseudo-politicians and members of parliament from time to time arouse their interest and gain popularity because of the show. But in my view there is no point in waiting for elections in order to make a proposal for conflict resolution, because I don’t think anyone -- either from Azerbaijan’s or from Armenia’s side -- would want to risk taking any steps at such a time. However, future elections have mobilized society. There can be many reasons for this. There is an increased interest in the creation of political unions, organizations, groups. These bodies prepare for elections. We have several blocs, and all of them voice criticisms -- but they could not create one programme for action. Their political platforms are so similar that even experts are not always able to distinguish between them, not to mention the population at large. In conclusion, I think a similar situation exists in other Caucasian states, and it all boils down to a banal fight for the highest office.

But I don’t want to oversimplify the political situation, forces and moods, because one can still feel that there is a mounting pressure within society. I would even go so far as to say that there is a subliminal discontent about people’s positions and lives in general, because of all that was kept inside on the problem in Karabakh and the sadness it caused to Azerbaijan. In reality, even according to Mr Safaryan, it seems that one needs to consider Azerbaijan as the main fixer of the conflict.

Not long ago, I read a biography of President Kocharyan in one of the diplomatic journals that Russia produces. There was a passage relating to the period when Azerbaijan occupied Nagorno-Karabakh, which gave the impression that while he was there, he was working under very hard conditions in an occupied area. Representations of this kind do not contribute positively to the resolution of the conflict. I think we need to approach with the thought about how much in South Caucasus’s interest it is to resolve these conflicts. The conflict resolution perspective and the future of the South Caucasus should have more priority than these small national interests.

I, together with my young colleagues, have founded the Association of International Research, where we are doing some very interesting work. It is interesting to
speculate about how probable it is that what happened in Georgia and Ukraine will be repeated in Azerbaijan. It is as if, it seems to me, we were betting on the outcome of the elections, whether there will be a revolution or not. I think that this should not really worry us. What is more important is to support those people who have shown achievements and are interested in politics, and to encourage them to become deputies in the parliament or something else. There is some support, but it is far from enough. These people should be independent, above all financially, because financially dependent people get influenced by the financiers. So, in this term, there is no absolute objectivity in these people. I want to say that I really feel that there are serious changes under way, even in the government itself. There are a lot of parties, opinions and moods in both the government and the opposition, so that there is no one united consciousness on either side. Because of this, the government is very keen to have a healthy balance of power between the government and the opposition. In theory, they should create a system of checks and balances, and if there is a precedence of law in society, then we may indeed obtain democracy.

If anyone asks me a question about what I think about a velvet revolution in Azerbaijan, in the event that there are falsifications in the elections, I would answer that it is impossible. As I said, I do not think there is enough of a social and material base for it. I repeat that until there are new faces, financially independent and competent people who enjoy the trust of the public, the electorate will always hesitate. It is not possible to have mass demonstrations as there were in Central Asia. I will perhaps not be saying anything new, but I think that our colleagues from the West should understand the structure that connects some government members with criminal groups in the territory of the South Caucasus. This is not a traditional mafia, like the Italian one, a clan or groups. There are a lot of difficulties here, and it is only possible to fight them if society is educated enough. The more social involvement there is, the easier it will be to fight such liaisons. But aggressive methods should not be used.

Even if we hypothetically presume that there will be an explosion and there will be a change in government, in my opinion it will not lead to any major change in the situation. I would want to give up this common rhetoric about democratization, although I do support the democratic changes that are happening in Georgia. I believe that a huge job must be completed before we can talk of exporting democracy from Georgia to other territories. All this rhetoric must be backed up by facts. We can talk however much you please about democracy, but in reality it will come only when society is ready for it. To conclude, power is a very sweet thing. As a famous English historian put it: “Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely.” So it does not matter who comes to power; what is important is to know why they came to it. Then we can count on some changes and reforms. Thank you very much.

DISCUSSION:

Question 1: My question is for Professor Huseynova. You mentioned that some new blocs were in formation before the upcoming elections -- new coalitions -- but that it is difficult to distinguish between them, the political platforms being very similar, and the voters would find it difficult to respond. Because of our interest in this panel, I wondered whether you could also confirm that this was true of their attitude towards the regional conflicts, specifically the Karabakh conflict. Have they also been putting forward very similar positions in relation to this conflict? Or are there some that are taking a more radical position to try to appeal to voters?
**Professor Huseynova:** As I said, a lot of these parties have similar points of view. I would not say that there are radical groups, but there are blocs that believe that the Karabakh conflict can be solved only by the use of force. This platform is actually very popular within the population; when discussed it has a patriotic character. “Let’s go and liberate those territories,” they say. But more moderate and more educated politicians, taking into account that these radicals have the support of certain international organizations behind them, prefer the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. At the same time, most say that if a peaceful solution is not possible, Azerbaijan has the right to intervene militarily. So most sides have a similar platform. There are radicals groups, for example the “Liberation of Karabakh” group and others. In this case, one can understand these people. They have been living in harsh conditions for a long time and it cannot be pleasant to feel yourself a refugee in your own country; but who is to blame or not to blame is another question. Their positions always find support, for example in press conferences or mass speeches.

**Question 2:** I would like to pose a question to both Mr Safaryan and Ms Huseynova regarding the causal effect of democratization on conflict resolution. Mr Safaryan mentioned that one of the necessary steps to be made in the region is more democratization: liberalization, better governance and eradication of corruption and to have more civilized and up-to-date governance in the region. Could you elaborate a little on how this could affect conflict resolution, how it could contribute to finding a compromise for the sides on Nagorno-Karabakh. I would like to hear comments from both of you. Thank you.

**Mr Safaryan:** Thank you for the question. In fact the Nagorno-Karabakh’s problem is, most certainly, manipulated by the superpowers and internal elites. I would like to give an example about how democratization can help conflict resolution. If, as Mr Russetsky has already said, the government is prepared to protect the interests of society, then they will not be afraid to enter into discussions with their constituents about various resolutions. But because Mr Aliyev and Mr Kocharyan are not legitimate -- Ms Huseynova may not agree with me in this -- they will never discuss any alternative ways of regulating the conflict with either the Armenian or the Azerbaijani citizens. They will always be aware that, at least in Armenia, the government came to power because of Nagorno-Karabakh’s problem, and that any change in the situation will threaten their own positions. What should be done?

Our institute has organized three or four public opinion surveys and the question to Armenians was: “What do you think is the main achievement of the Armenian government in recent years?” The answers came back that other than the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh, there are no achievements, not even democratic institutions or effective governance. When we asked: “What was the price for all that?” most answered that they had paid too much for it. So now people’s perception of the conflict is totally different. They think that any changes that take place will not be in the interest of peace. In my view, the Europeanization, and democratization of our society would transform the conflict. So the conflicting sides will have different perceptions of these conflicts. Azerbaijan is saying that they should return Karabakh, that the people there cannot have any other status than being autonomous, but Armenia says that Karabakh should be totally independent.

What can the transformation of the conflict provide us with? It can articulate other interests that exist in today’s societies, but because there are no channels through which to express these opinions, we have only one dominating approach to the conflict. This applies to both Azerbaijan and Armenia.
When it comes to corruption and other challenges, we shall be discussing this more fully later. There is a tendency to think that frozen conflicts have created conditions for military groups, who deserve credit in the country. In Armenia, the situation is very different. The groups that are involved in politics are not at all connected with the conflicts and war. These latter are totally different groups, to whom the government is particularly grateful, since it is they who kept them in power in the elections of 2003. I would like to underline one more time that these are two different types of groups. When we talk about the threat of these conflicts to our democracies, we have to take into account the fact that these conflicts exist only for manipulation and imitation.

The argument that was made in the last elections in Armenia was that Kocharyan is the hero in this war, and he must therefore be President. But the fact that no one else, either in the opposition or elsewhere, deserves any credit in the conflict does not automatically give him the right to be President of this country. This is the real effect that the conflict has had on the democratic process.

Other threats to our democracy have different channels. For example, as I already mentioned, Russian interests and the fact that the Russians make use of our country’s weaknesses, support the existing regimes, negotiate. This support stops democratic development. In this context, the West’s reaction is not adequate: Azerbaijan and Armenia approach the democratic process via different development paths. Thank you.

Professor Huseynova: I shall try to express my opinion more briefly. I would not want the audience to get the impression that Mr Safaryan and I are playing ping-pong. He says one thing, and I counter argue, but this is the reality: two countries of the South Caucasus that could co-exist peacefully and that argue about a piece of land. In answering your question, I would like to say that in order to solve the problem, I think that there needs to be a strong consolidation of society. So, in general, different groups must have one view of solving this conflict. There are already similar views. If civilian gatherings, political negotiations and academic discussions are to bear fruit, we must make real efforts to find people with real views.

I remember when we first had meetings of the South Caucasian Regional Institute, it was very hard, because there were a lot of doubts about each other and so on. However, these meetings have allowed us to hear each other out. From Mr Safaryan’s presentation, I draw the conclusion that he does not really know the real situation in our Republic. I cannot say that I know Armenia’s situation as well as he does, but I think that he slightly bends reality when he says that governance structures do not depend on the resolution of the conflict. The departure of the previous President has shown that everything is interrelated and this question will always come up until we understand that it is in both our interests to live peacefully and it is more profitable to integrate this region than always to be negative and push it to an absurd situation.

In our work with various refugee groups, an interesting fact emerges. When we ask the people who actually survived this hell, who lost a lot of relatives, about how will they live in their countries once the conflict is resolved, they answer that they will live as they lived before. So at this level, paradoxically, there is more understanding. I think that this should be developed. It is not a rapid process. We are ready to prove to the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh that it is in their interest to live in Azerbaijan’s territory rather than in Armenia’s. But we must take adequate steps for this. It is not acceptable to use these people who have been tortured for years in this situation. It is impossible to prove that they live better now than they used to. The earlier we
understand this fact, the better. I even think it is in Armenia’s interest. How long can they exist in this isolation? We must look at this region from a position of common interest. In these terms, it will be profitable. We must do it ourselves. I hear in these discussions about how the EU has to do something. That is not true! Nobody owes anybody anything. We cannot wait for the EU to come and resolve the conflict. Their help is definitely appreciated and their good will counts. But in the end the real steps must be taken by ourselves. Thank you.

Mr Russetsky: I would also like to come in here. I don’t have an opponent from Russia in this, so I find myself always in the middle of the Azerbaijan/Armenian format. Democracy must be available to everyone. If democracy exists for only part of society, then it is no longer democracy. Because of this, we must clearly understand what we face. We are facing typical divided societies. If we do not face the fact that there are two types of societies in Abkhazia, proponents and opponents of the secession, we will not be able to bring about the democratic reforms needed to help in conflict resolution. This is the first point.

Secondly, with regard to democratization, we need to democratize the negotiation process. We need to have more groups with varying interests enter into the negotiations and discussions. These groups exist and they do have their own influence on the situation. Unfortunately, however, those who are already taking part, block the participation of other groups. For example, regardless of the serious differences between the positions of the new leader of a part of Abkhaz society and Radariashvili, Sukhumi was blocking the former’s presence in discussions as much as he could. If, for example, Saakashvili had not given the status of personal representative to Lassani, his presence in the negotiations would have been impossible. Until we get rid of the situation that different societies living in the territories cannot negotiate, we will not move forward. They are the ones that must come to a compromise, decide the future of their land and live together.

There is a dangerous tendency to introduce federalism. I am not against federalism as such, but I think that ideas about federalism are wrongly approached by our society. These ideas are formulated in documents that were created this year, i.e. in February 2005 (7D), which concern the main principles that are proposed for conflict resolution. The first is the diagnosis, analysis and evaluation of these conflicts, which we do not have; and the second is a liberalization of the negotiation processes, and a democratization and demilitarization of the conflict zones. Thank you.

Question 3: I would like to ask the representatives from Armenia and Azerbaijan to expand on how they think the transformation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is going. When we say that the conflict is frozen, we at the same time know that it has its own dynamics, which bring us to new realities that differ from those existing, say, ten years ago.

Professor Huseynova: I do not think we can say that these conflicts are frozen in the full meaning of the term. The negotiating process on Nagorno-Karabakh continues. There is a huge amount of activity taking place on the part of international forces that are very interested in resolving this conflict. Various periods have different intensities of negotiation. If, for example, we have a period when there is an activation of an oil pipe, there is a stronger activation of negotiations to resolve the conflict. At the same time, the other side tries to stop this process; they have their reasons for that. This situation has existed for a long time. But now there are a lot of positive moments, at least from Azerbaijan’s side. We must propose a strong model. I am sure that if we discuss this model, both in Azerbaijan and in Armenia, it will give a push to the process. There is distrust on both sides. I can understand the citizens
of Nagorno-Karabakh, who ponder about the ways of returning to Azerbaijan and living there. These people must return to the society and live properly with all their neighbours peacefully as they used to. Work is now being carried out both by government and in other places on building this model, and I think we will soon have the opportunity to look at this model. It would be good if NGOs would support the process and the models. Afterwards, we will be able to see how it was perceived by other people. Thank you.

Mr Safaryan: I think that transformation of the conflict at this stage is happening more in Karabakh than in Azerbaijan or Armenia. Especially after the parliamentary elections in Nagorno-Karabakh, there are very interesting tendencies. The political game is becoming pluralistic and there are various groups and interests there. They have a different perspective on the conflict. I remember one of the electoral programmes of a certain political force that competed in these parliamentary elections; they had an opinion about the foreign affairs of Nagorno-Karabakh. I mean that, in some senses, Nagorno-Karabakh is more advanced than Armenia. The mechanism of compromise between the government and the opposition is more effective than in Armenia. You will not be able to find any person in a position of responsibility in Armenia who represents the opposition. We can say, therefore, that there is a transformation.

Chair: We don’t have a lot of time, but I think it would be interesting to discuss the situation inside Georgia. Paradoxically, after the Rose Revolution, which was very much a democratic revolution and change of guard, instead of witnessing an improvement of relations between Georgia and secessionist entities, we saw an increase of tension. There is a sort of paradox there and I am interested in the views of Mr Russetsky: that instead of democracies working together, we have a tendency to utilize force to resolve conflicts. What I am really interested in also is to what extent civil society can play a more positive role in resolving the conflict inside Georgia. Especially in view of the latest developments, we are finally seeing an opposition emerging. I would like to know your views on that.

Mr Russetsky: I think that this is a very important question. We have first to understand that regardless of the Rose Revolution, we are in a post-totalitarian stage. Our mentality is a post-totalitarian one. We do not see colours, and this is especially evident in the latest internal political conflicts. The foundation of our transformation, the role of civil society, international organizations and everyone who is interested in building a non-illusory democracy in our region, is our change from a totalitarian society to pluralism, when there is a third way at least. We don’t yet have that third way. If someone proposes something outside of the government structure, it is not accepted. So a totalitarian situation and structure remains, and only two colours exist: black and white. I don’t see the Rose, or any other colour yet in here. The main thrust will come with the third revolutionary wave to democratization. The first wave was in the USSR. The second was the one that opposed radical nationalism and extremism, and third one should finalize these reforms and bring them to a certain level and depth. This democratic depth is needed because it is at this point that stability starts.
Panel II: NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY CHALLENGES AND CONFLICT

Chair: In this second panel, we shall be focusing on the nature of the non-traditional security challenges in the region. We shall be looking not only at the characteristics of these challenges, but also at the responses by the local governments and their understanding of the nature of these different threats and the priority between them. You’ll note that we are concerned here with both the south and the north Caucasus. This is very natural because of the interaction between the two regions. This is a complex in itself when you’re looking at it in security terms; transnational threats cannot be localized to one side or the other of the Caucasus mountain range, and there are some worrying developments in the north Caucasian republics, which have to be taken into account in our understanding of how best to mitigate security concerns throughout the region. I would like to ask Colonel Langton to open the panel.

Christopher Langton, Head, Defence Analysis Department, International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), London

Thank you, Chair. And thank you to the organizers of this interesting seminar for inviting me here today. My aim in this talk is to give an overview of, and a background to, non-traditional threats to security in this region. These include terrorism; trafficking in small arms and light weapons, drugs, and human beings; counterfeit to do with cyber crime and of course cash; and finally, looking to the future, counterfeit medicines. I can’t go into detail on all these topics, and we can pick up some threads in the question period. But, having just had a session which is looking at the problems very much from inside the region, I’d like to start by making the important point that the things I am talking about, although they operate inside the region as well, come from outside.

In an age of global trade and communications, the traditional concepts of borders and territory is changing, and for the executors of terror and organized crime they mean very little. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, major changes took place to borders in the Caucasus neighbourhood, some twenty new borders being created regionally, and at the same time the EU created a borderless interior, believing that free trade was the priority and security was no longer the main issue. Very quickly, the euro zone became the target for organized crime, and a place where terrorist organizations could make their money. Now, what links all these threats together are two main strands. One is organized crime and the other is terrorism. The modern-day risk of the mass effect of terrorist action involves elements from all these threats. And the link between organized crime and terrorism is no longer in any doubt, as highlighted in the Council of Europe’s report on organized crime last year. It is for these reasons that terrorism and organized crime is seen as the main and the principle threat within the European security strategy.

In this connection, I just want briefly to mention the issue of communications in the context of transportation. We heard this morning the Prime Minister talk about the need to open up the transportation corridors. But with that come several dangers. There are vulnerabilities caused by global trade through transportation, perhaps particularly where maritime issues are concerned but also to do with containerization. There are about 1116 container ports in the European region, including this region. Rotterdam, the largest container port in the world, moves 322 million tons of cargo,
with some 10,000 containers leaving the port. An attack on a major port coming within a container that could have started its journey in Central Asia could cause large-scale disruption to European economies. The volume of this traffic alone makes it an obvious and attractive method of trans-shipping illegal or terrorism-related materials, given the statistically small chance of detection, which, according to United Nations, is approximately 2%. The fear that terrorists could exploit the container transport system that unites sea and land corridors was confirmed on 18 October 2001, when port authorities in a southern Italian port discovered a stairway within a container complete with a bed, heater, toilet facilities and water. The man involved had a satellite phone, a laptop computer, airport security passes, and an airline mechanics certificate for airports in United States.

Moving on to small arms and light weapons, it is particularly important to talk about this topic at the moment because next week in New York the biannual meeting of states tasked with considering the program of action to prevent, combat and eradicate this illicit trade takes place. The program of action was activated in 2001. It has many weaknesses, which can be seen within the south and north Caucasus region. It does not pay sufficient attention to the control and destruction of ammunition, or the control of man-portable air defence systems, nor does it pay attention to the control and destruction of explosives and improvised explosive devices. Critically to this region, it has no means of dealing with this problem within unrecognised territories, which by their very nature are awash with all these commodities -- and I use the word commodities deliberately -- and are not subject to the discipline of the international community and its protocols.

Moreover, if we talk about Eastern Europe being within this region, Transnistria even has its own arms production facility and has commercial contacts with other unrecognised territories. And I think that particular issue is very critical not just for the countries of this region but also for the European Union. Since the program of action was signed, and despite some progress, just to give you an idea of the scale, there are 639 million small arms and light weapons in circulation around the world. They are worth about 4 billion dollars. There are an extra 8 million small arms made each year legally with 16 billion runs of ammunition. Now, critically, 60% of all these weapons are in the hands of private civilians and not in the hands of government structures, and most telling, 500,000 people a year are estimated to die thanks to small arms and light weapons, which is an estimate that has not changed since the year 2000. In the context of man-portable air defence systems, there are 13 to 20 non-state armed groups in the world known to possess them. And in the context of explosives, which includes elements of artillery shells, as well as ammunitions left in conflict zones including mines, some 15% of all civilian casualties occurring between August and December 2004 were estimated by the IISS to have been caused by improvised explosive devices made from explosive remnants of war.

Coming closer to the region, according to the Southeast European Clearing House (SECAH) for the control of small arms and light weapons, in its report on Bulgaria in 2004, in the black sea region including the Caucasus there are some 93,000 illegal and unregistered small arms and light weapons. These are used commercially, to make money, and they are also passed between groups for specific illegal activities. Moreover, and particularly pertinent for Europe, the trade in handguns, pistols, automatic pistols and the like is increasing. They are the weapon of choice for the urban criminal, and particularly, if I may say so, in London, and can be bought for as little as 100 pounds sterling. Coming still closer, in March 2005 18 people were arrested in Armenia for planning to smuggle Soviet-made shoulder-fired missiles, grenade launches, and other military weapons to the United States. According to reports, those involved in this plan, which is very complex and involved criminals not
just in south Caucasus but beyond, including the United States, were Georgians and Armenians.

**Narcotics.** The United Nations has shown in its report for 2004 that considerable and increasing amounts of opiate is being smuggled through this region to Europe and Russia, and into this region for consumption from Afghanistan. Moreover, there are new routes opening up because of what is going on in Afghanistan, including routes to the south through India, to the Maldives, and to Sri Lanka, from where there are direct routes into Europe. It should be noted, too, from the International Narcotics Control Border report for 2004, that a grade of heroine known as brown sugar is increasingly being trafficked to Europe from South Asia. Critically for the north and south Caucasus, this substance is cheap and very dirty. It is aimed at the uses of low-income populations, such as those in some of the unrecognized territories, and it carries with it a very large health risk.

**Human beings.** The trafficking of human beings is an important and lucrative operation for organized criminal groups. The majority of the victims in Europe and the European region as a whole are women, who are trafficked from countries in Central and Eastern Europe such as Moldova, Romania, the Ukraine, the Russian Federation, and Bulgaria, and are then exploited as sex workers in Western and Central Europe. It is also known that the women from the South Caucasus region are taken under false pretences, with false visas, to Western Europe.

**Radioactive materials.** Benign radioactive materials – usually of medical origin -- can be adapted into weapons, Added to that, ammunition of the type of Alozan rockets manufactured in Soviet period to break up ice clouds for artillery are believed to be adapted to carry radioactive materials. Some 38 Alozan warheads were modified, or were believed to have been modified, for this purpose. And their last named location was in the Transnestria region of Moldova, which we have already mentioned. However, the only recorded attempt to make a dirty weapon, possibly using an Alozan rocket, was by a Chechen separatist group, which was caught in the process trying to acquire the materials. Another incident in United States involved Jose Padia, who was very advanced in planning a dirty bomb attack in 2002. But one confirmed case of material being stolen was from a research facility in Abkhazia when some seven capsules of Cesium 137 went missing in 2001 or earlier.

**Cyber crime.** Cyber crime, including financial fraud, is the emerging global threat. Despite security measures, the use of increasingly sophisticated computer systems and networks has left societies susceptible to computer-based attacks and has increased the opportunity for cyber laundering of money. The Council of Europe’s Organized Crime report suggested five scenarios that are fairly obvious and urgent to this audience: computer fraud; the accessing and copying of sensitive information, the manipulation and termination of computer-based industrial production; cyber attack on marine, air and space control systems, including the manipulation of container transport by changing handwritten manifests and typewritten manifests, and through the internet; and of course the ever-present threat of criminals being able to hide behind the internet.

Of particular importance to this region are the lack of control mechanisms and constant thirst for foreign currency in the Russian financial system, which has made the country prone to money laundering. Small banks come in to being on one day, carry out one particular financial fraud and disappear the next. Over the last few months, Russia’s Ministry of Interior has reported several arrests involving counterfeit currency and goods. In February, it was reported that nearly 28,500 euros had been confiscated. More critically, the interior ministry’s organized crime and terrorism
department reported that there are at least 100 criminal groups involved in this activity, led by 200 crime bosses, operating mainly inside the Russian Federation and the south Caucasus. They stated that up to 70% of the Russian criminal world is made up of north Caucasus ethnic groups, and the link between these groups and terrorism has intensified considerably in the last few years.

Finally, counterfeit medicines – the “growing threat”. In May 2005, the World Health Organization warned the international community about the increasingly rapid spread of counterfeit drugs and called upon states to cooperate to prevent a global trade of 35 billion dollar a year. For example, in 2001, about 200,000 people in China died from using counterfeit drugs produced in south and East Asia. Perhaps, the worst example so far is that the 20% of the anti-retroviral drugs being used in Africa to combat HIV/AIDS are known to be counterfeit. And that’s where I am going to stop. Thank you.

David Darchiashvili, Open Society Georgian Foundation, Tbilisi

My presentation, too, will be a general outlining of the basic elements of non-traditional and sometimes traditional security challenges faced in the region, but with special emphasis on the south Caucasus countries, in particular Georgia. In trying to understand what kind of non-traditional security threats are paramount for Georgia, I shall be considering some of the same forms of organized crime as covered by the previous speaker, including trafficking of arms, especially small and light weapons, trafficking of human beings, trafficking of drugs, weapons, radioactive materials, and some elements of weapons of mass destruction.

Clearly, since September 11, terrorism has been the prime concern of the developed democratic world -- for those countries that stand for liberalism and a market economy. However, for countries in transition from authoritarian rule to democracy, other, and I quote, “non-traditional challenges can be considered, which if we look closely might appear to be rather traditional and known for decades in history.” But, in any case, the political community or the expert community is very familiar with the notion of the weak state. The syndrome of the weak state presents transitional countries with a range of security challenges, and foremost among these is a state apparatus suffering from widespread corruption and a criminal underworld of unusual strength, where the mafia seriously challenges state institutions. Similarly, various religious and ethnic cleavages further undermine the integrity and viability of these states.

Another problem for the young governments of transition states is that, despite all their pledges to uphold democracy and the rule of law, they constantly face the challenge of sliding back towards a more personalized kind of authoritarian polity, where strong or not so strong leaders act as substitutes for institutions and laws. Sometimes this is justified by the need to strengthen the state against the non-traditional and traditional challenges mentioned above. Even then, however, not so democratic tools are sometimes employed by genuine democrats who believe in democracy but think it too early to apply it in its widest meaning. When this happens, it is really difficult to know whether we are dealing with genuine democrats employing some undemocratic tactics for a transitional period or whether these are just power-greedy elites who are using democracy as a disguise for their own power struggles.
One factor that it is important to understand when examining Georgia’s problems with regard to non-traditional security challenges is the difference between threat and risk factors. Basing myself on the research of several experts -- and one who comes to my mind is Christopher Dundecker. I would say that threats represent a clear intention on the part of certain hostile internal or external actors, either targeted against specific security objects or aimed at disrupting concrete situations occurring in the state, society, certain institutions, or international organizations. Or they could be directed at an individual human being. Risks, by contrast, are a kind of unwelcome development; they exist more objectively in the form of facts or events that might at a later date create grounds for concern.

This distinction needs to be made whenever we attempt to identify the security strategy that should address the security challenges of any given society, because if we agree with these distinctions between threats and risks, then one can easily understand that threats and risks cannot be handled through same institutions or in the same manner. In the case of threats, rapid reaction -- on the one hand, paramilitary or military police action, and on the other diplomatic activity -- is necessary, and the politics and policy employed are, as it were, elitist, specialized, classified. In the case of risk -- say, mass migration or poverty, which create a situational context for security policy -- they should be handled by other institutions and in a more open and normal manner.

This understood, it then becomes easier to understand the challenges faced by Georgia. Thus the Rose Revolution itself was a kind of response to the fact that the Georgian state had for years been unable to meet the very basic needs of Georgian society. Before the revolution the Georgian government was providing neither national nor human security for its citizens, nor was it able to project any viable security policy in the region or internationally. Despite Western assistance over the years, it failed to produce any coherent, viable or clearly defined security policy guidelines. There was no clear road map, no systematic analysis of how to identify and address the problems faced by various countries.

There is no denying that post-revolutionary Georgia is imbued with a new dynamic, and Saakashvili’s government must be getting tired of requests to tackle the security concerns of the population as well as those of the international community more energetically. It can certainly claim relative success in this process by comparison with previous governments, especially the later period of Shevardnadze’s time. Let me mention a few of its achievements.

In the context of non-traditional challenges – i.e., how Georgians perceive security threats and risks -- one can first of all note that after revolution no high-ranking official feels totally immune to criminal charges. Whereas formerly there was a kind of amalgamation of the state apparatus with the criminal world, and widespread corruption and organized crime were interwoven, this is no longer the case. A serious attempt was made to crack down on the alliance of corrupt officials and criminal bosses, with the result that this feeling of the untouchability of a certain layer of society has now gone. And that is one of the possible successes of the new government.

All this is, of course, part of the syndrome of the weak state. As the previous speaker noted, the Georgian mafia, together with the criminal groups of other post-Soviet countries, differs from the classical mafia organizations of the West and has its own flavor. We can talk about it, and about its peculiar role in state structures, but whatever it is, was, the new government has addressed the problem more or less energetically. This was the main security threat contributing to the weakness of the
state, but there were other elements of weakness contributing as well. One need only mention lack of proper structures, lack of professionalism, and lack of funds to conduct any kind of governmental practices that would have stood any chance of achieving good governance.

The new government has addressed these problems, these risk factors, by, for example, downsizing the state apparatus, which was extremely cumbersome in Shevardnadze’s time. Another example is the quite robust reform of the Georgian police. This has produced a new structure of patrol police, who have replaced the old, very corrupt traffic police and some other units and who seem to have more devotion to the task and a better image in society. This is a good start, although, naturally, there is still a certain lack of professionalism among the newly reformed Georgian police. A further relative success in addressing the problems of the weak state is that there are seemingly less instances of social discrimination and corruption, for example in drafting young Georgians to the Georgian military.

Also noteworthy are governmental attempts to ensure effectiveness in border protection and customs work, and certain steps to fight human trafficking as well as drug trafficking. Thus a commission has been recently created, under the Security Council, which includes representatives of civil society and is working on an action plan to tackle the trafficking of human beings. Drug-trafficking issues are being handled by an inter-agency group, also created not too long ago under the auspices of the interior ministry. Human security has been further improved since revolution by a qualitative upgrading of the ombudsman’s office, which tries to control the behaviour of the law enforcement agencies vis-à-vis ordinary citizens, and tries to monitor the situation in prisons and detention cells.

In addition, the new Georgian government has definitely made some progress in trying to address security problems related to territorial integrity. Here, as a positive example, one should note that the fiefdom of Ajaria, Aslan Abashidze’s fiefdom, ceased to be an autonomous state. There was also an attempt to solve the problem of South Ossetia in a much more robust, energetic manner, but this failed. However, from a positive point of view, one can say that the government is seriously addressing these problems of territorial integrity and interethnic relations, and is energetically seeking to find effective ways if not of solving them, then at least of moving forward. And in the case of the Abkhazian conflict, similarly, a positive, concrete element should be mentioned: namely, when Abkhazian society faced no less dramatic problems in 2004 in comparison with the political developments in Georgia during Rose Revolution period, the Georgian government at that time -- when Abkhazian society seemed split in two and facing a serious crisis of its de facto political existence -- behaved quite cautiously, and I know that this was appreciated by new Abkhazian leadership, even if not explicitly. There are of course from time to time hostile statements from both sides, but at that moment the Georgian government behaved quite rationally.

Security policy as regards territorial integrity depends on the existence of an overall official plan. In this regard, again, recent developments give some hope of success for the new draft security concept that has recently been put together. The document embodying the new approach has already been endorsed by the governmental agencies and is currently up for debate in parliament. Civil society has to some extent participated in this process; at least time was put aside to analyse the document, to comment and react on it, although the process is not yet finished.

Since the revolution, the Georgian government has been more effectively engaged in security-related relations with various international actors. First of all, the very
resumption of programmes with the World Bank and the IMF signal progress. Moreover, these relate not only to financial or development policy matters, but also to good governance, and as such to the security of any given nation, in this case Georgia, as well. Other security-related programmes are being developed, too, such as the NATO programme known as the individual partnership action (IPA) plan. This is in effect new for Georgia; it was started formally in Shevardnadze’s time, but nothing was done at that stage. It has now been drafted and adopted, and is being implemented right now. Another scheme that is currently being developed is the ENP action plan, which also has implications for Georgian security.

A special case of international involvement is Georgia’s contribution of 800 soldiers to serve in Iraq. Whatever the pros and the cons of the situation in Iraq – and it certainly gives legitimate grounds for concern – it can still be regarded, by and large, as an international security effort in a very vulnerable part of the world, and the Georgian government has tried to contribute to an international effort in this manner.

Nevertheless, problems remain. I do not have enough time to speak about them in detail now; I will just list them, and if anyone is interested, I shall more than happy to answer questions in the discussion period: Organized crime is not over, these problems still exist. In its country report on Georgia, the European Commission describes it as being the second, but still an important, route for the transfer of narcotics from East Asia to the West. This could hardly be done without the involvement of certain high-ranking official figures. In view of the extreme strength of organized crime, whatever attempts are made to fetter this underground community, it is still there, and quite recently it became obvious that even imprisoned these people can influence certain developments and processes which have political implications outside prison.

As regards the unresolved issues of Abkhazia and Ossetia, the existence of these conflicts still constitutes a security threat for Georgia, whether in terms of a threat to the very viability of statehood or because until a formula for settlement is found there is always a possibility of resumption of hostilities. Ethnic nationalism, xenophobia -- I mentioned at the very beginning these problems of the political culture. Despite the post-revolutionary crackdown, when certain perpetrators of religious-based violence, in particular, were imprisoned, these elements still remain. And certain official figures pay tribute, pay lip service, to radical fundamentalist groups. They do so, I would say, not because their sympathies lie with them, but because these groups are perceived as being capable of further expansion and thus being a possible threat for the future of the Georgian society.

The relationship with Russia is another area where all is not clear. It was initially a great success, with the breakthrough on the issue of the Russian military presence, whereby principal agreement was reached to withdraw these bases in 2008. But the bases still remain, and there is strong pressure from Russia to create anti-terrorist centres in their place. And in whatever way the situation evolves, this is more than a traditional security problem, the undermining of a given country’s sovereignty; rather, it is by way of being a non-traditional threat, because these forces are poorly controlled and, therefore, whatever smuggling of arms or other non-traditional threats may be envisaged, one is bound to look at these bases with suspicion.

Terrorism, in my view, also remains a possibility, because there is fertile ground for it. The state is not yet strong enough, despite the government’s best efforts, and there are social grounds for it in terms of the existence of not so liberal ideas, attitudes within society, unemployment, poverty and the strength of organized crime. So the conditions for terrorism are present: certain developments, certain systemic
shortcomings of the given security objects are still there. These risks are not necessarily connected with ill intentions on the part of certain political players; they stem, rather, from a lack of transparency in the accountability of the government, a lack of professionalism, overall overlapping of governmental agencies or an ad hoc manner of making decisions and solving problems, as well as the impatience -- or, I would say, the arrogant attitude -- of certain high-ranking officials vis-à-vis oppositional leaders, independent analysts or civil society activists.

Part of the problem lies with the opposition, which is quite weak in Georgia and perhaps at times overreacts and assumes too radical a position. But at the end of the day it is the government's responsibility to provide a better environment for the development of democratic channels and a stronger opposition. So far, however, this has been absent, and that is the problem of Georgian society at large. In short, strong grounds for radical nationalism, criminality and terrorism -- the main pillars of non-traditional as well as traditional security challenges -- still exist in Georgia, and they should be addressed. Moreover, Georgia will not be able to address them in an authoritarian manner; there are neither the human nor the material resources for that. The only way to tackle these problems is through participation. The sooner the government starts down this road the better. Thank you.

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I will try to be brief and highlight just some of the problems and instabilities developing in the north Caucasus that could have and are having a negative impact on the south Caucasus. I think it is very important not to forget what is happening in the north and to think about ways in which some sort of joint work can be conducted between Russia and the south Caucasian states in order to resolve these problems in a cooperative fashion and not in a confrontational manner.

One can identify three or four elements that are creating instabilities in the north Caucasus. One, of course, is related to the ongoing violence in Chechnya and the Chechen war. Another is the spillover effect of this war among neighbouring republics and regions, and the violence that is emerging also in some of the north Caucasian states, which is linked in some instances to Islamic radicalism and terrorism. Its nature and origins are sometimes hard to define; it is therefore best described as a sort of Islamist/terrorist violence, especially for example in Dagestan. The problem manifests itself to some extent also in Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachevo-Cherkessia. And, finally, there are issues related to political/criminal violence, which is often linked to criminal and economic interests.

So let me just say a few words about the situation in Chechnya and how this can impact the situation in the south. There have been, as most of us know, some positive developments in terms of the return of refugees from neighbouring regions, especially Ingushetia, compensation being offered to those who have lost their houses there and some help with reconstruction. However, the security situation remains quite tense still. There are small groups of rebels that operate often quite independently from the leadership of the Chechen rebel movement and they sometimes conduct guerrilla-type activities against the Russian forces based there,
as well as against the Chechen troops, in the form of roadside bombs, skirmishes, etc. We also see on a regular basis targeted assassinations of pro-Moscow Chechens -- Chechens that are loyal to Moscow, whether members of the local administration or members of the various militias. At times these incidents escalate into spectacular terrorist attacks, as happened, for example, in Beslan, or in Moscow in the metro; also important killings, such as the targeted assassination in Groznyy of the former head of the republic, Ahmad Kadyrov. Finally, federal troops and militias that are loyal to Moscow in their operations sometimes cause problems by conducting illegal activities and being responsible for abductions and disappearances. This is creating a strong sense of insecurity, and often there are spillover effects in neighbouring regions.

Of particular concern has been the presence of fighters and refugees in Pankiisk Gorge in Georgia. Although over the past two years Georgia has been quite successful in removing the remaining fighters -- many refugees have left, and there has been a re-establishment of authority to a certain extent -- the area still has a reputation as a haven for terrorists. Thus, whenever the situation deteriorates in Chechnya, there tends to be a lot of pressure on Georgia to act more decisively in Pankisi Gorge. For example, after the killing of Ahmad Kadyrov, the president of Chechnya, there was a lot of pressure from Moscow on Georgia. To a certain extent, therefore, one can argue that Russian and Georgian relations remain hostage to the Chechen wars. A large-scale operation of the kind seen in 1999 is very unlikely, because federal troops are in control of a lot of areas. Admittedly, they are not 100% in control, and rebels still operate, but it is hard to imagine a large-scale rebel attack of the kind that would spread all over the republics, with the corresponding massive refugee movement across the border. Nevertheless, any sort of deterioration in the situation could have a negative impact on Georgia.

Of course, as we all know, there has been a spillover effect in the neighbouring republics of the north Caucasus, such as Ingushetia, where there have been attacks on rebels, the most important one having taken place in June 2004. Operations conducted by units from the federal Special Forces and the FSB have resulted in abductions and disappearances, which has led to a deterioration in the situation. There has also been a spillover in Dagestan. There was a clear example quite recently, when a group of Chechen from Borozdinovsky village moved into Dagestan following an extensive mop-up operation in the region. They settled in the region of Kislyar. These Chechens, although they are from Chechnya, are Avars, so they obtained some support from the local Avars. Thus the mayor of Khasavut – Umakhanov -- took the opportunity to raise his profile. He went to the refugees’ base in Kislyar and decided in effect to utilize the presence of the refugees to march on Mahachkala, to challenge the authority of the current leader of Dagestan, Magomed Magomedov. This incident shows that to a certain extent a generalized instability is spreading and mingling with a local political situation.

This is an element to follow, because instability in Dagestan might have a negative impact on neighbouring Azerbaijan. We have witnessed a lot of attacks in Dagestan against police forces, the militia, members of the interior ministry, and it is very unclear who is behind these attacks. Could it be Wahhabi groups, the radical Islamist groups that have gone underground? Are we talking about politically motivated assassinations or attacks? Are these the result of revenge? There have been a lot of reports of torture and beatings by police, which have resulted in humiliation and suffering for the people, who have then turned into these insurgent groups. The instability has in many cases taken the form of targeted killings of politicians, the most famous being the killing of the minister for nationalities and ethnic issues. It is still unclear whether Wahhabs were behind this assassination or rival political
groups. In general one needs to take into account that the whole political class or elite in the north Caucasus may be facing changes, and there is no knowing how the process of change for this social grouping will take place. It could cause a lot of instabilities.

In this connection, the recent comments of Dmitry Kozak, a special envoy in the north Caucasus, hold particular interest. These comments, which took the form of a memo and were leaked to the press, refer to the emergence of extended family groupings, who are cooperating among themselves and are becoming very powerful. They are, he claims, monopolizing political and economic resources, and this is a very risky situation because if there is a change of power, of elite, it might occur in a violent fashion. It is still very unclear what role the Islamists play; they have been quite active in the 1990s, especially in Dagestan. Islamic communities were banned after 1999, when the second Chechen war took place. Many went underground, and it is now difficult to gauge their strength or how much support they have within the population. But what is clear is that, according to some reports, these resistance and resurgence groups are growing. At the same time there is concern among the police that they are the targets, with the result that their officers are starting to resign, and it is more difficult to find recruits. Russia, for its part, is sending many more security forces into the region -- into Dagestan, for example -- to improve the situation, and it is uncertain whether this will really make things any better. All these instabilities might well negatively affect the situation in the south Caucasus.

Let me finished by making a few remarks about one final factor: namely, the risk of conflicts breaking out in the north between, for example, Ossetia and Ingushetia. What would the likely outcome be of such an event? Would some groups in Georgia see it as an opportunity to be active in south Ossetia? There is a big question mark over this issue. It could well be something to monitor. Again, what happens if there is a conflict in Abkhazia and South Ossetia? How would the north Caucasians react? Would there be an inflow of volunteers coming to the north Caucasus? What in this case would the role of Russia be? A lot of elements need to be taken into account and followed through as part of the whole picture in order to understand the north/south Caucasus dimension. Thank you.

DISCUSSION:

**Question 1:** I have a question for Mr Christopher Langton. You have brought up very interesting facts, and to a certain extent we in the region do face these facts. But how can we prevent them? First of all, illicit and counterfeit medicines, this is a very serious problem; equally serious are the issues of the illegal transportation of weapons and drug trafficking in the unrecognized territories. All these problems have been recognized at the international level. So my question is, what kind of mechanisms can be utilized in order to prevent them?

**Colonel Langton:** This is a very important question. I can express a personal view, and that is that the threats we are talking about are non-traditional threats. They recognize no boundaries, no vision of territory, no territorial ownership, and this is because of the global environment that is emerging outside this region and elsewhere. Therefore I think the only possible way to counter them is to develop international mechanisms -- and there are some -- and to work through those mechanisms. I mentioned the protocols on small arms and light weapons, for example. This is a very weak mechanism, but it is also an example of other
international mechanisms, which were conceptualized at a time when the globalization of threat was not such an issue. The thinking for the programme of action for small arms came about in 1995, and the programme itself was eventually signed in 2001. So the thinking dates to the post-Soviet, post-cold-war era; by the time signature took place things had changed significantly. These mechanisms have to change to take into account the modern concepts and bring in the items that I have mentioned.

Dealing with unrecognized territories is another example of how the world was not focusing on this issue at the time when many of these international mechanisms were being considered. Therefore all I can say is they have to be adapted. Now, quite interestingly and very recently, about four weeks ago the political administration in Sokhumi for the first time agreed to allow in inspectors from International Atomic Energy Agency to look at some of the reports that I have eluded to and other people have eluded to going back to 1995. That is very significant in my view, because it gives a certain moral positioning to that administration, a certain responsibility that other people outside the unrecognized territory have accused it of not exercising in the past. And this may be an example that could be built on. I am not saying that this is a very fine idea, but somehow the international community has to work on international territories and unrecognized territories, has to adapt the protocols and persuade the administrations concerned to take part in these very important mechanisms which counter the threats that we are talking about.

Question 2: I also want to comment on the statement made by Mr Christopher Langton, and to reflect briefly on what Professor Huseynova said about alleged claims that there is some illicit trafficking taking place in territories under the control of Nagorno-Karabakh. First, regarding uncontrolled zones, and in particular Mr Langton's statements on what he termed discipline, I believe in this case we need to make a clear distinction between all of these conflicting areas and between all conflicts: just because there is illicit drugs trafficking in one conflicting zone, or in one so-called uncontrolled zone, it does not mean that it necessarily exists in another conflicting zone. Thus I think we need to have a clear vision of what's going on in each conflicting area and each unrecognized entity.

I would now like to come to Professor. Huseynova's comments, which referred to alleged claims that there are all kinds of terrorism, trafficking of small arms and light weapons, narcotics, whatever. I recall that the Azerbaijani government has several times rejected attempts to control cross-border trafficking, etcetera, but I recall also that the government of Nagorno-Karabakh has on a number of occasions extended invitations to relevant international structures, in particular the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Council of Europe, the UN and other relevant agencies dealing with illicit drugs trafficking, to send inspection or monitoring teams. Each time, however, that such an attempt was made, it was blocked -- for whatever political reasons -- by Azerbaijan, because Azerbaijan considered that since this was its own territory it should not be visited by international groups.

So to come now to the point that there is an internationally verified exercise on those territories, and in this case I mean in particular Nagorno-Karabakh, all claims of this nature are alleged and unsubstantiated because there is no single proof. I would like to see any international document on this, Mrs Huseynova, that you know, apart from the Azerbaijani one, any document issued, say, by one of the UN structures or by one of the Council of Europe's, that proves these claims. Therefore, to counter the existing real challenges, these entities need, I believe, to cooperate in one way or another, with international mechanisms and international existing regimes.
Mr Langton aptly mentioned the Abkhaz case: the Abkhaz government -- or, I don't know, existing political structure -- agreed to allow certain inspections on its territory. In my view, this issue has to be clearly withdrawn from the realm of political resolution, because when it comes to political resolution, people become reluctant to consider the real issue. We need to make a clear distinction here in order to find out a way to address existing issues through international mechanisms without touching on political status issues, because these latter belong to a completely different realm of negotiating processes. And let these negotiating processes do the work. Meanwhile the international community, through its existing structures and regimes, can try to counter the existing problems. Thank you.

**Question 3:** I have a comment on a statement made by Mrs Huseynova and I have a question for Mr Langton. Mrs Huseynova has incorrectly expressed herself in connection with the statement that the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh is used for transiting narcotics and that there are allegedly mentions of some -- well, occupied territories. Yes, I know that. Well, you have said that this is related to Azerbaijan, and that there are territories that are not controlled. There are, however, US State Department reports in existence on matters of drugs control and they refer to the reports of the government of Azerbaijan. They state, moreover, that the US government has no independent proof of the Azerbaijani claims. I would like to make it clear that the authorities of Nagorno-Karabakh are in fact ready for international cooperation on all these matters, including the transitioning and transporting of drugs, and we have stated this more than once. As to the question for Mr Langton: you have mentioned the issue of drugs, and have stated that in general the territories of unrecognized states and uncontrolled ones are used for transitioning narcotics. Do you have any concrete facts regarding Nagorno-Karabakh? Thank you.

**Question 4:** I would like to thank the presenters for their comprehensive presentations. Indeed they were so comprehensive that I may not have been very good at getting all the details. I will very briefly say that it is a known fact that the international community regards uncontrolled and unrecognized entities that lie outside international verification as posing a threat. This was the case in Afghanistan and also in other places. The point is not that you can verify something or have proof of it, but precisely that that you cannot verify it. Usually states fall under certain jurisdictions and assume certain responsibilities and act in a certain manner: they allow controls and accept their responsibilities. As the saying goes, you can't have your cake and eat it too, you can't conduct ethnic cleansing and occupy territories and then claim the rights of an independent state. Therefore the very nature of an unrecognized region such as Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan and occupied territories poses a threat for that very reason. We should think about how to find a verified road. But this is a different discussion; I think we should leave it to another time.

I do, though, have a question for Dr Sagramoso. First of all, I would like to thank her for bringing up the very important issue of the North Caucasus. I had noticed that the discussion notes, for instance, speak of the challenges of the new violence, and I took this to refer to Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the conflicts in Abkhazia and Ossetia mostly. But we forget that Russia is also a Caucasian nation; it has a very large chunk of the land in the Caucasus, namely in the northern part, and there is wide-scale military occupation on a daily basis. We manage these conflicts by forgetting them; it's a good way to go, and we are all doing this because it is convenient to do so. However, the convenience of it is strongly undermined by what Mr Langton called
non-traditional threats, because they come from here. So my question to the presenters is: what should the states of the region do? What would be the good policy approach towards the situation in the North Caucasus? To tell you the truth I am very confused, I really don’t know what to do there. And I think many of my Georgian colleagues would agree with me that it is really difficult to figure out what to do next. I think my Armenian colleagues are busy with other things, so it’s really not a big issue for them for the moment. But for Georgia and Azerbaijan, both of them are nations that border the Russian Federation. Georgia borders with Chechnya directly and that is a big issue. So I would appreciate it if you could say something. Thank you.

Question 5: First of all, I would like to thank the organizers of this conference for giving me the opportunity to participate. Secondly, I would like to thank the presenters who have raised the questions that we have been working on for more than a decade. I feel that this conference is qualitatively different from those meetings where we discussed in particular the sources of conflicts in our region and their developments. In other words, we have always or in most cases looked at the past. Today’s meeting may be an opportunity to look at the future. Thus, in the last presentation, I felt that it is not only me who is hoping to discuss what to do next. Not only how these things occurred, but also what the reasons are for these difficult situations, and the question what to do, need to be answered not by us but by the ones responsible for politics and authority. I think that this is the opportunity that the conflicts are themselves arriving at; they have brought us here. This is an objective process and with our immediate participation in it as observers we have tried to find the reasons and roots of the conflicts. But I feel that now the conflicts have revealed their reality, it is not the researchers of the conflict but the ones who make the decisions who are going to lay out an initial plan.

I think that this moment is a critical moment. If we continue to look at the past and not at the future, then it is going to be dangerous. We have already talked openly without making any practical solutions. Meanwhile, the so-called frozen conflicts are waiting for resolution. I do understand that it is not easy to resolve these problems, which are not in fact frozen; they, and the ones in Georgia, are actually ethnic conflicts. I would like to assert that I know these conflicts not from books and presentations: I myself am from that zone, although I am not an internally displaced person nor am I a refugee, but I am from that zone where conflict occurred; I am from Gaukr, and all of my family are still there. Therefore this is not an assumed view of conflicts but a very vivid imagination, and I do not have any Abkhazophobia. On the contrary, I have the warmest friendly relation with Abkhazians. Nor do I have Russophobia; in fact I think that it is a great country with a great culture. But whether the Russians’ current politics stand at the same level as their culture I have to question.

We have come to a point where the conflicts have shown their true nature. And the ethnic measurements have taken a rear place. I feel that the claim, for example, that the previous government, I mean the Georgian one, has allowed criminality to merge with authority is in the past. We should not look at the problem in this simplistic manner. I don’t think that everything depends on the morality of the authority. As already noted, the authorities were once immoral and now they are moral. I don’t think that it has to do with morality; the point is that the main problems, which relate to the phenomenon of the Caucasus, especially of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia, are being overlooked, even by the West.
Dr Sagramoso: I think we now need to start the new session, so we have to move a bit fast. I would like to ask Colonel Langton to quickly answer the question that was put to him, and then I will say a few words regarding the question that was put to me.

Colonel Langton: The question, as I recall, was this: did I have any evidence of counterfeit drug production in Nagorno-Karabakh? I think there is a misunderstanding here. I never suggested that there was counterfeit drug production; another questioner suggested there might be. However, what I did say was that in all the cases where there are unrecognized territories in so to speak frozen conflicts, the conditions exist where these sorts of threats can grow up.

Dr Sagramoso: In my case, the question related to what south Caucasian states could do to resolve a part of the problems in cooperation with Russia. I think it is very difficult to find an answer. Certainly it is very important to work in cooperation and not in confrontation with Russia to address a lot of these issues: i.e., to work at a regional level, to make a good assessment of the problems that exist, and try to find ways in which they can be solved. Many of the problems that were mentioned by Colonel Langton are present in these areas. And in this context there comes to my mind something of the failure that the European Union has had with Russia in the north Caucasus. It has insisted on methodology -- maybe rightly or wrongly -- on how Russia was dealing with the Chechen conflict. This has irritated the Russian government very much and as a result Western countries have been extremely marginalized from many developments in the area and have been completely unable to work positively with Russia. So maybe the answer lies in trying to find a channel of communication that will lead to partnership, to understanding the difficulties that are found when addressing some of the problems.

Panel III: REVIEWING REGIONAL CONFLICTS IN 2005 – LOCAL AND REGIONAL CONDITIONS

Chair: This panel is going to look at the regional conflicts as they now are in 2005, under local and regional conditions. We are going to address the chances of a renewal of violence. What factors could facilitate peaceful settlement? What are the options at the local and regional level that could move the situation out of the deadlock? Our first speaker is Ms. Oksana Antonenko, who has been doing substantial work on the conflicts in Georgia, Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Oksana Antonenko, Senior Research Fellow, Russia/CIS, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London

Thank you, Chair. Basically, if we look at what is really happening in the conflict areas now today in 2005, I think we might take an even longer perspectives than just 2005 -- maybe 2004 -- because in some ways Georgia’s Rose Revolution was a benchmark after which a lot of things were changing in the region. So I shall try to point out what I see as the new trends occurring in the region after 2004.

The impact of the conflicts, some ten years or more after the end of the hostile phase, has been tremendous. In my view, we are no longer living at a time when we
can say that the conflicts in the south Caucasus are frozen. Moreover, when we talked about frozen conflicts, I know that many of us did not like this phrase and did not appreciate this definition. What we really meant by frozen was that we believed that the condition of the no peace/no war could be sustained almost indefinitely in the conflict regions of the whole south Caucasus. Now, as I see it, we no longer have this confidence. On one hand, we have in some ways a new momentum for peace. There is a perception that it is possible to advance the peace process now, be it under the new political framework or indeed under the influence of internal developments of the region. On the other hand, there is now also a precedent in South Ossetia of the first real conflict escalation, where we are seeing a resumption of the rather major hostilities of last summer, with a number of casualties and an escalation of violence. So this means that no war situation can perhaps no longer be taken as given.

So what really are the new trends? What shapes the new perception of what one might call the frozen uncertainty surrounding the frozen and unresolved conflicts in the south Caucasus? I think there are seven major trends that have an important impact on the conflicts. Of course it is very hard to generalize across all three rather different conflicts, and I shall probably focus more on my experience of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. But to some extent the same trends apply to Nagorno-Karabakh as well, although not entirely.

The first factor that is having an impact on the situation is a process of domestic change in Georgia that was set in motion by the Rose Revolution, together with a new momentum for domestic transformation and democratization of the region. Clearly, we have seen what David Darchishvili already mentioned: a relatively successful resolution of crisis in Adzharia, or at any rate a lack of control on the part of the Georgian central authorities over Adzharia. And then we have seen an unsuccessful attempt to establish, or re-establish, control over South Ossetia. So the changes within Georgia had an impact. Also, whatever expectations, whether false or real, may have been raised about similar changes taking place in Armenia and Azerbaijan in the future, these too would have had an impact on the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh -- although I personally rather agree with Professor Huseynova's analysis that it is unlikely that we shall see a revolution in Azerbaijan for the reasons that she mentioned. However, there is an expectation also among the international community of changes happening within the states.

The second issue is that we had a precedent of conflict escalation in South Ossetia, which had a huge impact both on the conflicts themselves and on the perception of those conflicts among the external actors. Before the escalation of the crisis in South Ossetia last year, the international players barely remembered about the South Ossetian conflict, whereas nowadays, of course, it is very much on the agenda of international organizations and international experts. But it is also on agenda of many other players in the region, including the Russians and the OSCE and other mediators in conflict. And there is of course a fear and a concern now that a similar situation may arise in other conflicts. The legacy of that conflict escalation in South Ossetia last summer is probably going to be with us now for a very long time.

As a result, a lot of confidence-building and people-to-people contacts that have emerged in the region over more than ten years during the no peace/no war situation have been broken. We have seen massive mobilizations and rearmament of the population. Quite a lot of weapons have been brought into South Ossetia from outside, from Russia. We have also seen a complete change in the pattern of South Ossetia's economy and modes of existence. Whereas previously South Ossetia had been a sort of de facto entity, dependent on trade with Georgia via the native market,
this has now been replaced by almost 100 per cent control by Russia over this region. And what we have just seen in these first days of July, when the Mayor of Moscow, Mr Luzhkov, allocated almost 3 million dollars directly to support the South Ossetian authorities without any consultation with, or indeed notification of, either the international community or Georgia, indicates how Russia's control over the region has become almost complete in many ways. And that was not the case before the escalation of conflict in the summer.

A third factor that is helping to define the new situation in the region is a very acute perception – not only among the states in the south Caucasus but also increasingly among the international community – that the existing frameworks for settlement of conflict, be it under the auspices of international institutions such as the UN and the OSCE, or of ad hoc groups like the Friends of Georgia, will no longer be effective in bringing about a resolution of the conflict, a task they had carried out for many years. But at the same time there is really no clear vision or clear perception of what alternative format can be found in the near future. So there is disillusionment in many ways, accompanied by a delegitimation of the role of international mediators, and I think that this has a huge impact on the kind of frozen uncertainty over the conflict situation in the region and the perception of deadlock.

Another issue is that there is now an increasing perception among the three south Caucasus states, particularly on the part of Georgia and Azerbaijan, that time is no longer on their side, that the longer the de facto entities continue to exist and develop their institutions, and their contacts with the outside world, the more likely it is that this will all eventually lead to some form of recognition. So a sense of urgency about the need to do something in the near future is increasingly dominating the political discourse within those states. And often time pushes them to take what are perhaps hasty decisions, as was the case in South Ossetia.

Also relevant is the factor of the young generation, the people who grew up with this conflict and are now coming to the age when they are not only the young generation but also in many ways the decision-makers. Thus in Georgia, for example, we have now in government, in most of the key decision-making positions, people who never saw the conflicts of the early 1990s and who do not perhaps fully realize the impact of the conflict, or fear as much as their predecessors did a new escalation of conflict. So we are seeing a new generation coming into power, and on the one hand this generation does not fully understand the conflict, but on the other it is also more hard-line. This is perhaps primarily the case in Azerbaijan, but it also applies in some ways in Georgia in regard to the conflicts of preservation of territorial integrity.

A further significant issue is the role of Russia. This was well illustrated by the events in Ukraine, and it is interesting to note that before these events there was the situation over the elections in Abkhazia, when Russia was trying very hard to assert its authority over the election process. And we have seen how clumsy and unsuccessful this attempt was. And so what we actually see in Russian policy, which is of course also different from what was the case in the 1990s, is an increasingly weak and incapable Russia on the one hand and, on the other, a more defensive Russia, which regards regions like South Ossetia and Abkhazia as much more important opportunities for realizing their geopolitical objectives than were ever present in the 1990s. At the same time, as Dr Sagramoso very ably described in the case of the north Caucasus, Russia has become increasingly distant from an understanding of the Caucasus realities, and the actors who actually make policy vis-à-vis the conflict are not necessarily the same people who sit in the Kremlin and make policy there. So it has become increasingly difficult, I think -- even if we take the model described by an earlier speaker of trying to redefine some of these
conflicts in terms of Georgian/Russian conflicts -- to identify whom to talk to, whom to engage with on the Russian side, in order to encourage some process of conflict transformation or even negotiations over conflict resolution.

Another factor is, of course, the instability around the region, which has a direct impact on the conflicts. Dr Sagramoso was talking about the north Caucasus: I think what is happening now, for example, in North Ossetia is very telling. We have seen -- since the end of the Zasokhov period -- the appointment, just a few weeks ago, of a new president of North Ossetia, Mr Mansurov. And unlike Mr Zasokhov, who had been a moderate Soviet apparatchik, the new leader whose rise we are witnessing is really a champion of Ossetian nationalism, who in his very first interview with the press actually talked about one of his major objectives being the reunification of Ossetia, without making any reference to the reunification of Ossetia in the Russian state. So we have seen in the North Caucasus the rise of a new generation of nationalist leaders who have a much reduced capacity to manage their internal problems but at the same time are increasingly using nationalist rhetoric to reassert their popularity. And I think this is a worrying sign for the prospect of the conflict resolution in Caucasus.

Finally, a factor with an important impact has been the emergence of new players in the region. One of these is of course the European Union, with its European Neighbourhood Policy, where we have a new approach towards dealing with conflict resolution issues that differs completely from anything we have seen in the last decade. I shall now say a bit more about the logic of this new thinking.

So what are the characteristics of the new strategies for addressing the regional conflicts? Again, I really want to emphasize that I shall focus in my remarks more on southern Ossetia and Abkhazia than on Karabakh, because I believe that many of the things in Karabakh are rather different, and maybe I'll say a few words about that later on.

In regard to South Ossetia and Abkhazia, first of all it is impossible to reinstate the status quo: we don’t live in status quo era. If we want to move forward, we can no longer expect and hope that conflicts are going to be unresolved and frozen in the way that they were in the 1990s. And this is probably the biggest mistake of Russian policy: to seek to refreeze and reinstate the status quo in the region -- a strategy that is not possible, in my view, because of the situation in Georgia, because of the ambition of the Georgian authorities, because of the new players in the region, and because of all the factors just listed. We are living in a dynamically changing situation in which the decision-makers have to actually take decisions and so really important decisions at that. I would go so far as to say strategic decisions; we no longer live in a period of making tactical decisions on conflicts.

The second issue is that if we look at the 1990s -- and this is increasingly understood, I think, by the international community as a whole (not only among experts but also among decision-makers) -- it becomes clear that the strategy of isolation of the de facto entities or separatist regions, whatever you want to call them, has been unsuccessful in achieving even the most fundamental objective of promoting reintegration with the recognized state entities. Equally, it has been unable to create a constituency within those entities that could deliver both public opinion and the political process for integration necessary for some sort of resolution of the conflict. So the strategy of isolation has failed. What we have created instead are extremely isolated societies, with a predominantly siege mentality, that have been completely dependent -- both economically and strategically -- on support that came to them only from the direction of the north, from Russia. And consequently a huge
gap developed between these societies, and in particular I talk about South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and societies in Georgia. A lot of things that David Darchiashvili was talking about in terms of the processes that are taking place in Georgia -- democratization, reform, European integration, Euro-Atlantic integration -- have been entirely absent in these conflict areas. As a result, they really became little more than an extension of realities that dominate the situation in the north Caucasus -- with the exception, perhaps, of slightly more selective attention from some authorities there. So this was not helpful for the peace process.

The third issue is that there really is not much of a constituency for peace in South Ossetia or Abkhazia, if we define this as the restoration of the territorial integrity of Georgia. Instead, there is an increasing pluralism of views, for example, in Abkhazia, rather less in South Ossetia, particularly after the escalation of conflict, but what we do not see within these societies is any powerful political force which actually supports the idea of any form of reintegration with Georgia.

Another very important factor is the actual process of reconciliation, and the very complex notion of reconciliation that this entails. For the process of reconciliation between Georgia and Ossetia -- and I talk about Ossetia broadly speaking, not just from ethnic perspective -- and the Abkhaz societies has not in fact taken place. This has been because the contacts have been limited, and also because after the escalation last summer there was no perception -- at least in the South Ossetian and Abkhaz societies -- that the events that led to conflict in the first place in the early 1990s would not be repeated. This perception still persists, which makes reconciliation, in my view, very difficult. And without reconciliation it is clear, I think, that any sort of reintegration with Georgia is going to be very complicated.

Finally, there is of course the issue of basic human rights and freedoms, and the rights of people residing in these regions. The pattern of thinking that existed in 1990s went roughly as follows. Because these entities are not recognized and because there was a factor of ethnic cleansing, particularly in regard to Abkhazia, the international community simply did not recognize that the same human rights standards should be available to the people living in these territories as are offered, for example, to the people living in the recognized parts of Georgia’s territory or in other parts of the world. And I think as long as this conflict continues, this sort of attitude is no longer sustainable.

In fact, for a number of reasons, it has not been sustainable for some time now. First of all, these people have found other ways to realize their human rights. For example, from the perspective of the right to travel, because the United Nations did not issue them with UN travel documents -- that is, in regard to Abkhazia, but the same thing applies in South Ossetia -- they simply received Russian passports and they can now travel abroad. And if we look at the situation as regards other basic freedoms and human rights -- for example, elections, the right to be represented or freedom of speech, etc. -- these people just simply started to build their systems in isolation and then to present them to the world. Thus we’ve seen elections in Abkhazia, which again clearly cannot be recognized as legitimate elections, there is no question about that, but the fact that Russia’s interference in these elections has been left without any international response, whereas its interference in elections in Ukraine brought us to a new revolution, just shows the way that the international community has completely different attitudes towards people, in each case trying to express different views. I know that some of what I have said is rather controversial, but this is not just my view; it is increasingly becoming that of many of the experts who are dealing with these issues.
So what conclusion can we draw from all this? In my view, we need now to look forward and find a formula that can help to shape these societies to give them the right to realize their human rights while at the same time creating a constituency for peace. We also need to create a legitimate interlocutory forum, and again I want to emphasize the distinction between a legitimate peace and legitimate authorities. Further, the framework within which conflict resolution takes place should be changed, and I think the changing framework includes the issue of European and Euro-Atlantic integration as well as the issue of region-building in the South Caucasus and maybe even broadly in the Black Sea region. There is now a big debate about what the region is, whether it is the Caucasus as a whole or not. Again, there are different approaches here. We need to find a way to engage the people living in those conflict areas without legitimizing their aspirations for secession perhaps, but recognizing the legitimacy of their grievances and their pursuit of human rights: namely, the right to elect their representatives, to build a pluralist society, to have education for their children, and so on.

How do we achieve this? It is a very tricky issue. Moreover, it is clear that if we, as international community, cannot resolve the difficulties in the cases of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, this region is simply going to become part of Russia, not only de facto but de jure. And no international pressure would be able to prevent this from happening because we are already 60 per cent there. Because Russia is not bound by the same limitations as the international community has imposed upon itself of not engaging with these societies, we are now at the stage at which we will have to modify this stance and engage with these societies. We need to find a formula for engaging without legitimizing secession, without leaving the floor or the door open for conflict resolution efforts and the creation of a legitimate constituency for peace.

The latest move of this kind is a plan prepared for Ukraine and the Transnesterian region and presented at the GUUAM summit. This is a five-point plan about changing the structures of Transnesterian society by means of a major democratization initiative, which was announced at the summit. It is very interesting that the President of Georgia approved this plan for Transnistria within the GUUAM framework. So it probably means that a similar approach can be applied also to South Ossetia and Abkhazia. In the case of Abkhazia the elections may already have taken place, and in South Ossetia they are due in 2006. And in many ways, from my perspective, what the Georgian government has to offer by 2006 will define in the long run whether South Ossetia will ever be part of Georgia.

**Ghia Nikolaishvili, Adviser to the Minister on Conflict Issues, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Georgia**

Thank you very much. First of all I would like say that I am not a researcher. I must thank the previous speaker for her comprehensive treatment of the subject. Although I did not find her conclusions particularly heartening, I must agree with a lot of what she said. Now I will touch upon some issues that she perhaps omitted and outline the position more from a Georgian official perspective. Let me begin with recent developments in the conflict zones in Georgia, particularly in the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions, and South Ossetia. It is not a simple story. The first half of 2005 was a special period in that it saw several major developments. In Abkhazia, for instance, there were what were described as elections of the new de facto leadership, on 7-8 April 2005 there was the UN-sponsored Geneva meeting, with the
resumption of talks, discussions about a peaceful settlement and the expression of concern about the human rights and security situation in Gali. On 4 May the special envoy of the president of Georgia briefed the UN Security Council. On 12 May a meeting was organized in Gali on security issues by the SRJ. On 16-17 June there took place a meeting of the Sochi working groups on the return of refugees and the reopening of rail transport links with Abkhazia. On 2 July there was a meeting in Gali on railway issues, and there is the forthcoming meeting in Tbilisi on security issues, to be held on 20-21 July. As for the Tskhinvali region, there was the announcement on 26 January 2005 by our president of Georgia’s proposals for peace and conflict resolution, made during a session of the parliamentary assembly of Council of Europe, then the recommendations of the Venice commission responding to these initiatives, then various activities by the parties in the conflict zones relating to security, demilitarization and economic recovery issues. Three or four different gatherings took place to discuss economic development. The local de facto leader made unusually frequent trips to Moscow, and there emerged a series of statements and initiatives. The new leader of North Ossetia-Alania made his first statement proposing the setting up of a single Ossetia; there followed a number of internationally-sponsored meetings and discussions on major issues, expert meetings, policy meetings in Brussels, and an international conference on South Ossetia conflict resolution which we are planning to hold in Batumi in one week’s time.

At first glance it would appear therefore that the peace process, the process of conflict resolution, is gathering pace and that significant results will be achieved. However, if we examine events in detail, we find this is unfortunately not the case, and I will now try to brief you on this subject.

As you know, when the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991 many republics gained independence, including Georgia, but virtually from the start some in Russia refused to accept the end of the Soviet empire, and Russian worked to undermine the new-found sovereignty of bordering countries. This especially affected Georgia. No former Soviet republic was subject to more pressure than Georgia. For more than fourteen years Russia refused to remove its troops. Peace broke down shortly after independence in both South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and Russian forces aided ethnic separatists as a way of weakening Georgia, sending arms, money, volunteers and military advisors. Later Russia was involved in negotiating peace settlements and ceasefires, and forced Georgia to accept Russian-dominated peacekeeping forces. This situation remains unchanged despite some involvement of the UN and the OSCE. Almost the same pattern was repeated by Russia during last summer’s events in Tskhinvali, when the new Georgian president decided that the long festering status quo was unacceptable, as it would be to the head of any democratic state anywhere in the world. There is still controversy over this decision, but let me simply put a few questions to you. What leader would have tolerated the presence of separatists armed and sustained by a foreign power, the same power that refused to withdraw its own illegally stationed troops? What leader would have tolerated massive contraband markets supplied directly from Russian territory and operating under the noses of international monitors? What leader would have tolerated threats against ethnic Georgians in South Ossetia while foreign volunteers from Kuban, Abkhazia and even Transdnestria were arriving to fight against Georgians, as happened in July 2004? Finally, what leader would have tolerated separatists whose loyalties were to a foreign country and whose closest connections were with the intelligence services and criminal mafias of that country? It should have come as no surprise, I think, when President Saakashvili began to take steps aimed at a peaceful reincorporation of South Ossetia. It should equally have come as no surprise when the Russian media portrayed the President as rash, reckless and irresponsible.
Unfortunately this Russian propaganda was picked up by some Western media too. They painted these efforts to achieve national reintegration as impulsive and erratic, but they were not. They were legitimate efforts to reach a peaceful resolution in accordance with international law. It is worth noting that, deeply isolated from the rest of Georgia but with its links to Russia; South Ossetia had become a giant black market. The entire economy was criminalized. Cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, arms and foodstuffs all came in duty and tax free. A massive open-air black market operated with impunity in Tskhinvali. The profits from the contraband were distributed among Russian border guards and Russian military officers, and also among the peacekeepers and South Ossetian and other local corrupt officials. Some foreign diplomats even suggested that this smugglers’ paradise was a good thing, because it provided employment and low-cost goods. I am afraid that I cannot agree.

In view of the experience of last summer and of how promptly Russia advised the separatist leaders to turn to open military confrontation, we believe that there is a serious chance of the violence being renewed. Those responsible would be the separatists and their advisers, not Georgian leaders, who have repeatedly and clearly demonstrated their peaceful approach to the conflict settlement process. The best guarantee of deterring Russian or separatist military action, to provide the time required for a multinational diplomatic solution, is a strong and secure Georgia. That is why we are strengthening our army and law enforcement structures, not in preparation for another war. The recent initiatives for a peaceful solution proposed by the Georgian government, and its readiness to see an expansion of the role of the international community, for instance the UN, the OSCE and other friendly states, are a further demonstration of its peaceful intentions. But as our colleague from Azerbaijan has pointed out, there are always two options, peace or war. The second option we do not want, and I do not think that anyone does, but we have to take it into consideration.

There are serious concerns and obstacles relating to the peace process, and they are no secret. Common to both conflicts is the direct involvement of Russia in political and economic developments in the conflict regions, frequently now with no consultation with the Georgian authorities, violating all existing agreements, that is even those agreements which Russia imposed on us in the first place, and departing from the standards of behaviour required of a mediator. In the case of Tskhinvali we can explain you very openly and easily what are the main concerns we have in this region. In the case of Tskhinvali the main concern we have can be explained very easily. It is the inability of the Russia-dominated JCC format to provide stability. It is probably not necessary to go into more detail about violations that are taking place. Of course it is not just the Russian side that is involved. Small mistakes have also been made by Georgia, perhaps even big mistakes – but the issue is who has the responsibility for coordinating matters and for stopping this kind of thing from happening. The JCC format is a very strange one. The Joint Peacekeeping Forces appear to be achieving something compared to their work under General Nabzodorov, and General Kulakhmetov seems to be a more forward-thinking individual, but generally the line comes from Moscow – how to behave, how to turn a blind eye to fourteen illegal Ossetian military posts in the conflict zone and at the same time highlight seventeen illegal posts on the Georgian side (in reality we only had fourteen). The biased approach and the deliberate ignoring of certain things puts this structure and its mechanisms at serious risk.

Another aspect is the need for full demilitarization and monitoring of the region, including the control of mountain passes by the two sides, the JPKF and the OSCE. We are in favour of the checking of the passes being done jointly by Russian peacekeepers together with OSCE monitors. Russia uses these passes regularly.
Only yesterday I received information that this method had been used yet again in a clandestine way to deliver Luzhkov’s humanitarian aid supplies. This was despite three notes from our Ministry of Foreign Affairs, explaining in detail our understanding of the role of humanitarian assistance, our view that humanitarian aid is sacred, and something we would never oppose in itself, whether it is directed towards Georgians, Ossetians, Chechens, or any people, but insisting that there exist certain rules governing relations between two sovereign states, and that these rules should be respected. We explained how the goods should be delivered, because last year as you remember goods delivered clandestinely were seized by the Georgian government, and only as the result of an act of good will by our president were they ultimately delivered to the Ossetian population. Despite this unfortunate precedent, yesterday it happened all over again. It was interesting to see the list of goods that Mr. Luzhkov’s $3 million is providing for the South Ossetians. I am sorry to say that almost 60 per cent of them appear to be intended to support another conflict, which the information at our disposal unfortunately seems to show is being prepared for by the Ossetian side.

Another issue is raised by statements from the South Ossetian de facto leader and by the new North Ossetian leader, Mr. Mansurov. Even the leader of North Ossetia in the Soviet period, Mr. Galazov, allowed himself several times to say that we should unify the two Ossetias. This brought a very serious reaction from the OSCE at the time but it passed without any serious consequences. But now we have Mr. Mansurov, chairman of the parliament and apparently the appointed leader of North Ossetia, declaring that the only option is to have one Ossetia. How am I or any Georgian, official or unofficial, to regard their position as mediators? Should they really be sitting round the table with us at the JCC? We shall have to pose this question very seriously. If Russia fails to respond, and if Mr Mansurov does not rethink his very careless statements, then we will try our best to kick them out in the full meaning of this word from the JCC structure.

Finally, in the case of Abkhazia there are specific things that need to be done to intensify the UN-led peace process. This process is making progress in some areas but not in others. Our greatest concern is the need for active monitoring and some response to the realities of human rights violations. Perhaps people are not aware of the terrible state of affairs in Gali. People have no chance to study, or to get education in their own language. This is something which should be brought to the attention of bodies such as Amnesty International, Helsinki Watch and so on.

In conclusion I would say that our overall position is to increase international involvement in resolving the conflicts. Fortunately or unfortunately, Russia is a player, and a very bad player, especially when it uses its veto power. We asked Russia quite seriously, at the OSCE level, for an increase in the number of OSCE military observers by three to five in the South Ossetia conflict zone. The response was effectively negative, because it made a decision conditional on agreement from the South Ossetian leaders. I can assure you that I read all the OSCE reports, and all the four or five OSCE representatives are doing unbelievably good monitoring reports, really detailing and explaining everything. But they are limited to the territory of the conflict zone, which is a bad thing, and we hope that the international community will do something about that.

Then if we consider the possibilities for making direct contacts between the conflict regions and Georgia, for instance, Russia plays a negative role here too. They will not allow us simply to meet the Abkhazians in a corner to say a few words. Russia is a big obstacle in that respect. There are a lot of stories about the inability of Azeris, Georgians and Armenians to get on with each other. But it does not have to be like
that. It suits certain people to keep us divided. We need close cooperation for the sake of our joint future and our prosperity, and for this we need to take up common positions on regional issues. This especially concerns Azerbaijan and Armenia because they have a virtually bilateral dispute. But Georgia was, is, or will be a friend of both republics. With more unity perhaps something can be accomplished with the help of the new players that have been mentioned, like the EU and the United States. What we have to do is get together to overcome our divisions and to create good living conditions for our people.

Elin Suleymanov, Senior Counsellor, Foreign Relations Department, Office of the President, Republic of Azerbaijan

First, I would like to emphasize that I am speaking in my personal capacity. Secondly, I must say that this event is a very good opportunity for dialogue. We do not get much opportunity to talk to Armenians, and Armenians probably do not get much chance to talk to Georgians.

I agree with several of the points made by Oksana Antonenko, although no doubt not all of them apply to us. No doubt if I were from Georgia I would be saying adamantly that some of them do not apply to Georgia. I consider myself to be from the older generation in Azerbaijan. I lived with Armenians. I had classmates who were Armenians. I saw the beginning of the Karabakh war, and the beginning of war with Armenia, and I saw the ceasefire. Those people sitting here who did not live through that should understand that for my country Karabakh is a bleeding wound. When Oksana Antonenko referred to 'the rights of those residing in that region', I was struck by the thought, what about the rights of those who do not reside anywhere anymore? I respect the rights of the 120,000-240,000 Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh. They are our citizens. They should be protected under the law of the republic of Azerbaijan. I used to work with the UNHCR and I have seen generations of homeless people. I have seen seven-year-olds who have never seen home singing the national anthem of Azerbaijan. Of course these people are strong, they are making their own way in life, they don't complain. Azerbaijanis from Karabakh are doing alright, planting their trees, selling tomatoes. But they are traumatized, mentally and psychically.

I would agree with Mr Russetsky when he said, 'Please do not talk to me about democracy in breakaway regions. How can there be a democracy if 40 per cent of the population has been driven out, or even if 10 per cent of has been removed from the game?' Then there is the issue of pluralism. If all the other parties were excluded from the elections and only the Azerbaijani ruling party was allowed to participate, then there would be disagreements and opposition within the party. Of course there are disagreements. Democracy cannot be based just on the fact of elections taking place and a couple of mayors being from the opposition. It is also based on whether all the electorate participate. You cannot conduct ethnic cleansing and then talk about democracy. I am not trying to say that elections should be conducted among the displaced people. I am just saying we should understand the realities of the situation. Of course for Azerbaijan to be a fully democratic state, we have to incorporate and respect the rights of those citizens of Azerbaijan who are of Armenian origin and who reside in the occupied territories, on the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. And also in Azerbaijan, there is no question about it. If we want
to be a European nation we should do the correct thing – this is an international commitment that Azerbaijan has made.

But let us not let things become too politicized. We often see things in black and white. As Mr. Russetsky said, we need to see the situation in colour. Recently we have seen some changes, some expressions of hope and some promising signs. In answer to the question concerning the chances of a renewal of violence, I should say that so long as the conflict is not resolved of course there is a chance of that happening. In order to settle the conflict it is not necessary for the Azerbaijani army to reach Stepanakert. Waving our flags at each other will not help. What is needed to resolve the conflict is that we talk to each other, that we begin respecting each other. True, Karabakh cannot be independent, everyone knows that, and it will never be part of Armenia. At the same time I agree with Oksana Antonenko that they probably cannot go back to 1988 – that would be senseless. We need to find something which satisfies both sides.

First we need to come closer to each other. For instance, recently Azerbaijan proposed opening up a transport route through Karabakh into Armenia and from there to Nakhichevan. This would make us all hostages to each other. I do not understand why there was not a positive response. There was a proposal for Armenia to withdraw from those regions which are not claimed by the secessionists in Nagorno-Karabakh in exchange for better communications, a confidence building measure. That too was refused. Of course we could talk for years about preserving a security buffer around Nagorno-Karabakh, a security buffer which as proposed exceeds the zone itself three times over in area. We have to agree on what is proportional for defensive purposes. Perhaps this is an attempt to create a bargaining chip, but for what? An entire generation in Azerbaijan have been living through this now, for twelve years. The government is often accused of being militant, of taking a hard line, but the truth is that in Azerbaijan today my government stands probably as the most moderate force, a force for ending the conflict. The reason is that people are simply tired of the situation, and their patience is running out. They will say at some point, we do not want negotiations any more, and indeed they are beginning to say just that.

Oksana Antonenko is right to say that there is a severe crisis in the structure of the peace process. Imagine for a second that you are living somewhere in Azerbaijan and that you want to go back to your home. You see meetings going on here, you see meetings going on there, but nothing happens. In the meantime we managed to convince the Russian Federation to withdraw its forces from its Georgian bases, but the idea was not to withdraw them to Armenia. The idea was for them to go back to the territory of the Russian Federation. By doing what they did they changed the balance. Indeed talking of local factors which could facilitate a peaceful settlement, one might say for one thing military resources should not be moved to the territory of one of the sides in a conflict. And by the way Russia is a co-chair of the mediating process. Although I do not agree with everything he has said I agree with Ghia Nikolaishvili in his eloquent description of the Russian mediating role.

On the positive side Georgia and Azerbaijan have been cooperating very closely with NATO recently. The European Neighbourhood Programme has been extended to the three nations of the Caucasus. Although it is a rather vague project, and not strongly resourced, it is promising. We do not have to look far for an example of how to reach peaceful solutions. Show me one example in the former Soviet Union where two nations have worked together as effectively as Georgia and Azerbaijan to overcome their problems. Every day, people would say to me that the BTC (Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan) pipeline would never be built. Now not only have we opened the BTC, but
Azerbaijani oil is flowing to Ceyhan and will benefit Turkey. This is because the parties made a strategic choice – this is our region, this is the Caucasus, and we will back it. Of course there are disagreements between Azerbaijan and Georgia – thousands of small disagreements. But the most important thing is, what is our vision for the region? Where will we be in twenty years? I believe that Georgians and Azeris made the right choice. We want to work together and with third parties in order to build up our region.

Our door has been open to Armenia too. But you simply cannot conduct a campaign of ethnic cleansing, occupy someone else’s territory and then ask for a piece of the pie. At the international level this does not seem to be understood. Where are the relevant UN Security Council resolutions? Numerous international documents recognize the occupation. We need to talk together about what we can do, how we can live together. I ask my Armenian colleagues, what kind of future do you want? Do you want to end up isolated? Occupying more land than you can use? Cut off from your neighbours? Complaining that history has been unfair to you, and fearing that the future will be even more unfair? Do not make that choice, for your own and my children’s sake. I would prefer to live in a normal country where I can call on my Georgian neighbours, and on my Armenian neighbours, and sit down round the table with them. For that we need to have normal relations in the region.

My final comment refers to Oksana Antonenko’s remark about the differing international reactions to Russian interference in Ukraine and Abkhazia, radically different for the obvious reason that Ukraine is the second largest country in the former Soviet Union in terms of population and Abkhazia is of course a breakaway region. The diagnosis is correct, but I would not take such a negative view of things. Both in Abkhazia and in Ukraine the Russians failed to have their candidate elected. At the end of the day, life is not so unfair after all. The Russians lost in both cases precisely because they interfered. It is not the international community but electors who decide the outcomes of elections. The people of Ukraine simply did not want Yanukovich. And if the Abkhazians do not want someone, then he will not get in. That was an important lesson for all of us.

Varuzhan Nersessian, Head of the OSCE Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Armenia

I would like to reflect on some of the points raised in the discussion so far and then to highlight our view of things, particularly Armenia’s view of the current situation in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the prospects for its resolution, and to talk about our vision of the future of the Caucasus as a whole. First of all, what are the chances of a renewal of violence? I shall look in particular at the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict because of my country’s long involvement in that unfortunate dispute. One could say that the end of 2004 and the beginning of 2005 was a time when there was a possibility of resumption of military activities, of front-line hostilities, although not on a large scale, because the preconditions for that were absent.

I am very glad to have this opportunity to discuss these matters with my distinguished Azerbaijani colleague. I fully understand his comment about patience running out at some point, leading to a resumption of hostilities. But I must say that unfortunately we have been witnessing a very bellicose and militaristic stance on the part of Azerbaijan. I would like to question my very distinguished Azerbaijani colleagues about this new emphasis in Azerbaijani politics. On the one hand,
negotiations are held out. On the other we have a situation where the Azerbaijani Defence Minister or even the President of Azerbaijan are promising to take Nagorno-Karabakh by force and resolve the matter once and for all. So what does Azerbaijan really want with regard to Nagorno-Karabakh? I can cite hundreds of documents or statements by senior Azerbaijani officials promising to settle the issue by all the means available, including military ones, sometimes even calling for the smashing of Karabakh. Azerbaijani officials may of course be taking up positions for electoral reasons, trying to appear more patriotic. But some self-examination is needed, I believe. How can we be sincere and frank with each other in the conflict resolution process if we are not clear about such things?

In our case, in the case of Armenia or in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, Nagorno-Karabakh will speak for itself. We are sure about our goals in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. I prefer to look at the matter both from a theoretical and from a pragmatic perspective. But I must say that current international trends seem to point very clear conclusions. I would not want to draw exact parallels, for example, with the cases of Kosovo or East Timor. But looking pragmatically at the development of the Nagorno-Karabakh peace resolution process, I see clearly one path shaping for the people and for the population of Nagorno-Karabakh and that is towards achieving its status through self-determination.

As far as the possibility of a renewal of violence is concerned, although the international community in the persons of the mediators will take a strong line against anyone who tries to resolve things by military means, there will always remain the possibility of a resumption of hostilities. This would be a tragedy for the people of both nations. Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh would have certain military advantages if the war resumed, but in practical terms it would be a tragedy for everybody in the region. So we need to do everything we can to prevent any possibility of it happening. The international community should maintain a very clear and explicit stance.

Let me know come to the core issue of our vision of the region and of Nagorno-Karabakh. The basic issue, the root of the conflict, is the status of the territory. When the Soviet Union dissolved the populations wanted self-determination and reunification with Armenia. Hostilities broke out and a ceasefire was established in 1994. This is incidentally a unique ceasefire in the region because it is self-maintained and monitored. There are no international peacekeepers. Regarding the core issue of the status of the territory I must say unfortunately Azerbaijan has not so far been clear and explicit, though I am sure many Azerbaijani politicians recognize that the matter is a foregone conclusion, whatever is declared along the lines that there will never be an independent Karabakh and so on. In reality the region has completely changed.

The development of democracy is vital, particularly in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, because no one has the right to deprive the people living there of their basic human rights, including the right to elections. With regard to the comment made about recent elections, I appreciate that there were Azerbaijanis living in Nagorno-Karabakh before the conflict, but there were also many Armenians living in Baku, and other places. I agreed with the comment by Oksana Antonenko about the need to have legitimate interlocutors for achieving a peace settlement. If you want peace, you also have to have people elected to negotiate about peace. Regarding the election question, I think sooner or later the international community should separate it from the national status question, because if there is a stalemate over the national status issue the local population cannot be expected to go on in a state of disorganization, as the case of Kosovo shows. So I think there is a need for a new approach to such
situations, a need to respect the rights of the populations, their basic, democratic human rights, and to seek peaceful solutions.

My personal view of the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh is as follows, and it coincides with that presented by the President of Armenia, when he outlined the possible paths to reaching agreement on the status of Nagorno-Karabakh. Neither Armenia nor Karabakh will ever agree to the subjugation of Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan. This would provoke another war. We see no way back to the past. The other territories under the control of Karabakh self-defence forces are to be returned. It has been made clear by the President and by the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Armenia, with the backing of the leadership of Karabakh, that once the national status issue is settled, these other territories will be returned, apart from the lifeline corridors. So there is a possibility to resolve the conflict by peaceful means. The military route is too hard, and is not justified by the situation. Thus we should strive to persuade the leaders of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh to support a workable compromise, the outline of which is already clear to everyone concerned. If we make it clear and explicit to our populations (I mean particularly in Azerbaijan because in the case of Armenia the President has clarified once or twice what would be the nature of the compromises), if the leadership is sufficiently courageous to address the population in a simple way that opens up the debate – I recall that the late President Heydar Aliev did this a couple of times before the key Paris negotiations – then the way will be open to start a frank and sincere dialogue with the population. Following that the presidents will be in a position to negotiate, and something can be achieved.

DISCUSSION

Question 1: I think that each of the conflicts has its own particular complexities. Maybe you will agree that one of the most important components of these conflicts is a conflict over concepts, an ideological clash of names and terminology. Even today this clash of concepts was visible. It is certainly not pleasant for Azerbaijanis to hear the term Artsakh being used instead of Nagorno-Karabakh, and for Armenians it will not be pleasant to hear the term Nagorno-Karabakh. The same thing applies to placenames such as Khankendi and Stepanakert. Although the last two speakers did not use the phrase ‘Georgian-Ossetian conflict’, the first two speakers mentioned South Ossetia 31 times, Ossetia 10 times, and the Tskhinvali region 14 times. On the territory of these conflicts, there are many different groups of inhabitants, and they all have their own preferences. Thus using certain terms can actually lead to an increase in the level of tension and conflict. Unfortunately sensitive terms are used not only outside Georgia, but by Georgian state officials as well, which does not help to resolve the conflicts.

I would like to ask the speakers their view about how the international community is closing its eyes to the way that Russia’s policies in Chechnya are effectively being extended to Abkhazia and South Ossetia. For instance, today a new prime minister of Tskhinvali was elected whose name is Morozov, and who is a citizen of Russia. The situation there is very complex. There are two levels of opposition in Tskhinvali. First there are ethnic Georgians who are against the partitioning, and second there are ethnic Ossetians, many of whom as you know do not have a voice. If they say anything critical of the general stance of the Tskhinvali regime then they are likely to be beaten up, or in the worst case even deported from the territory. These facts tend to be ignored. We do not pay sufficient attention to the ethnocratic regimes that exist in these zones and to the ethnic discrimination that goes on. Finally, I should express my concern over the withdrawal of Russian forces from Alkhalkali to Yungri, as it
might make the situation more difficult in three ways. It could provoke an escalation of the situation in southern Georgia, it could worsen the situation in Tskhinvali region, and it could damage Ingush-Ossetian relations.

**Question 2 (Hijran Huseynova):** I would like to make a few comments on the presentations, and pose some questions to the speakers. The first question is for Oksana Antonenko. I somehow feel that no-one understands the true nature and origins of the Karabakh problem. It is simply a dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia, a territorial question. There is no such entity as the Karabakh people, just Armenians who are living in a compact area on the territory of Azerbaijan, just like the Azerbaijaniis who lived in Karabakh and who were simply expelled from that territory, as they were from the territory of Armenia itself. But somehow with regard to the first group its problems always seem to need to be solved right away. As Mr. Suleymanov correctly stated, it as if the problems of other groups are less urgent, and it is only this ethnic group that has to receive a new status. But of course, appetite comes with the feeding, and this could continue endlessly. I would like to hear your opinion about why we are so sympathetic to one group, while we close our eyes to the problems of others. The second question is to Mr. Nersessian. I too support Mr. Ghia, who expressed the desire to have Azerbaijan and Armenia friends at last. We have a much longer experience of friendship than of hostility. If we could only focus on all the good things that have happened between our people, we could find a common consensus much more quickly, and without any mediators. However, I understand that you are actually quite satisfied with the situation as it is. You think that things are going your way and you do not need to change anything. But history teaches us that nothing is as straightforward as it appears at first sight. And if the situation were to change suddenly, Mr. Nersessian, what would your position be then?

**Question 3 Malyan:** I would like to answer the question of our colleague from Azerbaijan, Mr. Suleymanov, concerning how we see our future. As someone who lives in Nagorno-Karabakh and represents the government of Karabakh, I can say that our nation is looking for peace. We have consistently and on several occasions proposed opening a direct dialogue with Baku, but without any response. Baku’s lack of willingness to have contact with us in Stepanakert does not help the conflict resolution process. In these circumstances we will continue to build our state and to develop our civil society. Our elections are conducted at a higher level than those in Azerbaijan. In regard to the argument that the local Azerbaijani population did not take part in the elections, in contrast to Abkhazia, it is true that the Azerbaijani population in Karabakh made up 20 per cent of the total, and we certainly recognize their rights, but if we follow this logic, then all the elections and the referendum on the constitution that have taken place in Azerbaijan since 1988 could be described as illegitimate, since about half a million Armenians did not take part in them. There was ethno-territorial mixing on the territory of the former Azerbaijani SSR at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, and we can say that the republic of Nagorno-Karabakh actually dates from the same time as the republic of Azerbaijan. And so there is no need to think up virtual solutions and ignore the rights of the people who live in Nagorno-Karabakh. Instead one should think about how to build a relationship and how to achieve stability, here and in the region. We see that as equal subjects we should live side-by-side, communicating and relating to each other in a constructive way. We have had a long history of good relations, as Mrs. Huseynova said, and we should value it and look to the future, instead of harking back to 1988. The fact that during the Soviet era Karabakh somehow came to be integrated into Azerbaijan does not mean that Karabakh should be part of Azerbaijan for eternity. But we need to be good neighbours, and we are ready to cooperate. I must say that our side has put a proposal to the Azerbaijani side consisting of over twenty points,
one of which was the road connection between Azerbaijan and Nakhichyevan mentioned by Mr. Suleymanov, but our offers were left hanging in the air.

**Question 4 (David Darchiashvili):** Listening to the arguments and discussions, it is clear to me that the South Caucasus is a genuine region. It is a region because the destinies of the people who live here are very much interconnected. Now this is on the level of sharing information about conflicts. I do hope that it will rise to the level of regional cooperation. But the suffering, the mutual resentments, distress and conflicts also link us to each other and make us a region. Russia is not part of our region. Although it borders our region its power and its political interests are not centred here but elsewhere. That’s why I think that the main problems and the main causes of the problems are here inside the region, not somewhere in Moscow. Moscow is using them, understandably, and Moscow is interfering, and they do have their own interests to forward here, but I do not have the impression that Russia feels that its destiny will be determined here. Someone stated, God forbid that anyone should use the term ethnic conflict about what is happening here. But that is just what is happening. We could describe what is going on as nationalist conflicts, but the word nation is associated with a state, and our conflicting parties have different levels of statehood. Thus it is better to use the word *ethnos*, which means a group of people who are related to each other, and identify themselves on the basis of a common past, common cultural traits and common interests. In the end it is because of these considerations that people are dying, not because of some criminal interests or other. During the Abkhazian conflict, and I believe it happened in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict too, even the criminals tried among themselves to make a peace agreement. In the beginning the criminals in Abkhazia and in South Ossetia tried to find a common language. On both sides poets, writers and academics, on the other hand, were fully engaged in the struggle. Young people died believing they were defending the land of their ancestors, and their bones are there to prove it, and we have to understand that for Armenians Karabakh is part of their identity, just as it is for Azerbijanis. They believe that ‘one cannot have two mothers’, as one Abkhazian said. It is the same when Abkhazians are talking to Georgians, because they consider Abkhazia to be their territory, while we think that our identity is based on a territory that includes Abkhazia. We have to understand that the whole reason for the Karabakh, South Ossetian, Abkhazian and North Caucasian conflicts is to be found in historical arguments about which piece of land belongs to whom, and the transformation of this land into a sacred symbol. This is a matter not just of identity, but also of self-image and self-respect. If all sides do not manage to understand this, such feelings will prevail and we will never solve the conflicts.

**Response from Oksana Antonenko:** I am glad that my presentation has provoked a discussion here, because we rarely consider new approaches, and I think that it is important to try to discuss these new ideas at least on our specialist level, although they are often not pleasant to face up to, because we are talking about conflicts.

Second, I do not want to live in an unjust world, but unfortunately we are living in a very unjust world. In this situation we have to make an art of politics. I would not like to draw an analogy between Kosovo and the Caucasus, but I was involved with that problem case, and unfortunately their status is going to be determined after what has basically been a process of ethnic cleansing. Now Serbia faces the choice of joining the EU without Kosovo or Chernogorye, or not joining. As I see it the same kind of option faces Georgia as well. This is not an easy thing to say because obviously I would want Georgia to be intact as a state and integrated into the EU and NATO. Of course in terms of realities and possibilities, in many ways Georgia is making its own strategic decisions. Maybe the situation in Armenia and Azerbaijan is different, because I feel there is not an early prospect of partnership for them (apart from IPAP
Finally, regarding the refugees, there are many programmes working today with refugees. And certainly we cannot describe the elections as legitimate either in Abkhazia, or in South Ossetia. They are quite illegitimate, especially in Abkhazia, because a large part of the population was forced to leave. I have met refugees who were obliged to leave Abkhazia and South Ossetia, about 60,000 people, also from other parts of Georgia, because they were simply forced to abandon their homes. It would be worthwhile to establish just for once a precedent in the South Caucasus where such people get their homes back. Georgia has taken responsibility before the Council of Europe to adopt a law of restitution and to give back what the Ossetian population lost in Lisi, in the Bogojensk region. If Georgia as a mature state takes the responsibility for passing this kind of law, and can implement it, then we will be living in a new world in the South Caucasus, from the point of view of state maturity. For this reason we need to work with the refugees and preserve the hope that they will go back, although in current conditions we know that that is impossible. Today we need to create a constituency for peace in these regions. We need to plant the seed among the new generation who will eventually sit round the table and resolve these conflicts. I have friends in Tskhinvali (a Georgian lady who is married to an Ossetian) who have told me that she had to hide in the basement this summer, and again they are in hiding. We are again entering a spiral of violence which could lead us to war. We cannot simply let it happen. Obviously if it leads to war, any prospect of regional action or integration into EU and NATO will be ruled out. It is our responsibility as specialists to make our own contribution, and to come up with new ideas, however difficult it seems.

Response from Elin Suleymanov: My first point is that we do not have available a representative of the Azerbaijani community of Nagorno-Karabakh who could actually discuss the issue of democracy. That is not a joking matter. Let us not try to compare our standards of democracy. None of us is a shining example. I thank my colleague Mr. Nersessian once more for saying that the international community must make its stance clear on the occupation of Karabakh and surrounding areas of Azerbaijan. Article 51 of the UN Charter allows a country, in fact obliges a country to defend itself in the case of armed attack. In fact, any attempt to prevent Azerbaijan from using force legitimately would be against the UN Charter. I am not advocating that. I am just saying that as long as the conflict is unresolved there is always the possibility of hostilities resuming. East Timor is not comparable. It was a land occupied by Indonesia for a long period. And during that time Indonesians and many others considered it to be part of Indonesia, but legitimately it has never been so. And at some point East Timor was liberated under pressure from the international community. If you look at the map, East Timor was a land under occupation just as Karabakh is now.

Response from Varuzhan Nersessian: In response to Mrs Huseynova’s request to put myself in the shoes of the Azerbaijani community of Nagorno-Karabakh in the current situation, I would say that if I were a moderate Azerbaijani politician, taking into account the interests of the Azerbaijani people, I would want to disseminate a culture of tolerance. That would be at least something to start with, and would enable an open and frank dialogue. And briefly to reply to Mr. Suleymanov, I must say that the situation in East Timor is an exact parallel, because Nagorno-Karabakh was illegally incorporated into Soviet Azerbaijan. I cannot recall any international document prior to that event which stated that Karabakh was part of Azerbaijan. Indeed the League of Nations questioned the claim of Azerbaijan to Nagorno-Karabakh. I think Mr. Suleymanov is well aware of what I mean. In response to Mr Russetsky’s point on the withdrawal of Russian
military equipment from Georgia I must say that we are very happy to see it, and the progress being made on the Istanbul commitments. On the other hand may I take the opportunity to assure everybody around this table that the possible transfer of the Russian military equipment onto the territory of Armenia is in no way connected to any possibility of regional destabilization, for the reason that the numbers cannot exceed the limits set by the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty. The CFE treaty is legally binding, and the presence of Russian military equipment on the territory of the Republic of Armenia is fully in accord with international law and within the limits set by the CFE treaty. If items of heavy armament are moved to a Russian military base in Armenia, that does not mean that they are going to pass under Armenian control, and there are all kinds of international monitoring agencies to keep an eye on this.

Panel IV: THE WAY FORWARD: PRACTICAL MEASURES

Giorgi Khutsishvili, Chairman, International Center on Conflict and Negotiations, Tbilisi

In my view the problem is not so much that we have unresolved conflicts in the South Caucasus, but the way that these conflicts have become frozen. The main issue is how to overcome the inertia that the conflicts have acquired, which is preventing the interested parties from resolving them. Looking back over the history of these conflicts, it is evident that attempts to change the situation in the conflict zones have provoked covert attempts to preserve the status quo. This is because it is in the interest of many parties either officially involved in the conflict zone, or interested in the conflict in one way or another, to change the situation or to preserve it as it is.

Most of the ethno-territorial conflicts in the world remain unresolved, then, mainly because those with an interest in prolonging the status quo are much stronger internationally, regionally and locally than those with an interest in changing the situation and helping the conflicts to emerge from their frozen state. This group of forces that spontaneously coalesces around the zone of conflict, and that has economic, political or other interests in prolonging the conflict I have described as a conflict preservation system. In this perspective the main issue is how to deal with this system. The challenge is how to defrost the conflicts. We have had very good example of a frozen conflict, I am sorry to say, during this conference. Positions have stayed the same as they were many years ago, as have the issues in the debate, the parties and their positions, and the rules of the game. This stagnation prevents the parties involved from looking at things with fresh eyes, and from perceiving the opening up and the closing down of opportunities. Impulses to resolve the conflict are subdued and overwhelmed by impulses to preserve the status quo.

In this way we can distinguish between freezers and movers. The freezers are the spoilers of the peace process, the parties that prevent it from having a successful outcome. In many conflicts in the world we see the spoiling of solutions to civil wars. However traumatic the living conditions of the people, dictators managed to maintain themselves in power, especially in Africa. In most cases the efforts of the international community prove to be insufficient to resolve or to defrost the conflict in a positive way. This vicious circle of conflict preservation is the main issue that needs to be addressed.
Who are the movers? Those behind the democratic revolutions are movers. I have no hesitation in saying that what is now happening in the CIS space is a positive development, and that the revolution in Georgia opened up new opportunities for the people there to deal with their problems. This is not just an academic judgement: it was clear in practice that new opportunities were opened up. However, alongside the view that the defrosting of conflicts opens up opportunities, there is another view that defrosting conflicts creates a threat of destabilization. The events of summer 2004, for example, represent a panic reaction on the part of the conflict preservation system to the emergence of opportunities for a peaceful solution. The opportunities emerged from the improvements in relations between Georgia and Russia following the economic summit in Tbilisi. Saakashvili and Putin’s meetings were based on new priorities and they led to certain agreements about the conflict zones.

It is important to note the differences between the South Ossetia conflict and the Abkhazia conflict. Georgians do not perceive the South Ossetians as engaging in ethnic cleansing of Georgians. From the South Ossetian point of view, Georgians are not occupiers of their land; they are not aliens on their territory. However, according to the Abkhazian view of things, which has strengthened over many decades, especially over the last decade, Georgians are occupiers. The experience of peaceful life together, mixed marriages and so on becomes more and more remote as time passes and successive generations lose any memory of it. Thus these legends become frozen in the minds of the population. This serves the aims of the conflict preservation system, to have the kind of alienation in the conflict zone that makes reconciliation impossible. Some consider that defrosting conflicts may be undesirable because it may bring all sorts of unpredictable consequences. We heard this view in summer 2004. Yet this should not lead us to the conclusion that we have to abandon any moves, however peaceful and non-violent, to defreeze the conflict and that we should simply prolong the status quo. This was the policy that the Shevardnadze government followed during its decade in power. While international and domestic experts characterized Shevardnadze’s government as lacking in political will, the successor regime was certainly not lacking in that. But last summer this turned out to have unpredictable results, which led to a lot of criticism.

I cannot pass over the Russian factor. Here we have a paradoxical situation, which has been noted by other participants. A custodian of the peace process cannot be a spoiler at the same time. And Russia’s role has been more that of a spoiler than a mediator. May I refer you to a new publication due to be released by the UN Universities Press at the end of this year containing contributions by an international team of specialists, and devoted to the role of spoilers in the peace process.

Scott Newton, Chair of the Centre for Contemporary Central Asia and the Caucasus, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London

I have been working with Conciliation Resources, on whose behalf I am speaking here. My comments are not to be attributed to them, however. I have most recently been conducting a series of seminars and discussions here in Georgia with officials from the Foreign Ministry, the Department of Conflict Resolution, members of the Abkhazian Government in exile and students, and I have doing the same thing in Sukhumi during the last week. I am the only international lawyer here, I also specialize in post-Soviet law, and I used to specialize in Soviet law. That gives me a unique perspective, which I want to exploit here to create a platform for criticism and provoking discussion. I want to challenge the vocabulary of conflict resolution from a critical legal standpoint, using law to put the politics back in. I am going to confine
myself to the subject of Abkhazia. The conflicts in the region are exquisitely particular — in particular they differ from a legal analytical standpoint. And it is somewhat problematic to lump them together either as post-Soviet or as Caucasian. Karabakh and Ossetia both have a very important *interregnum* dimension for instance, which the Abkhazian-Georgian conflict does not. The legal, political and historical basis for claims varies. Nonetheless, there are commonalities, which I am also going to stress because they tend to derive from the same Soviet institutional legacy.

I want to start with the following example. An article from the 25 June issue of the *Economist* deals with the EU’s relations with its eastern partners. After a rather unflattering portrait of Transdnestria the author states: ‘Transdnestria is in effect a criminal racket with a small piece of land attached.’ He goes on to say: ‘It beggars belief that Russia can claim international responsibility and at the same time prop up Transdnestria and two other separatist enclaves in Georgia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which are just as far outside the law.’ I would submit that this is a rather prejudiced and unfortunate characterisation. Unfortunately it is rather widespread. This kind of smugly dismissive attitude distorts the realities of the Abkhazian conflict. I think the trouble springs partly from the vocabulary of conflict management and resolution, in which we have all been socialized, as the previous speaker pointed out. ‘Conflict management’ is a rather anodyne, depoliticizing concept, which masks all sorts of interests and conceals motives. It is like the phrase ‘regime change’, used to mean comprehensive dismantling of the institutional apparatus of a conquered state; or ‘democratization’, often used to mean thoroughgoing integration into the neoliber(al) global economic order. Like these concepts, or that of ‘human rights’, for that matter, ‘conflict management’ covers a multitude of sins. I would like to stress straight away that at the heart of most so-called contemporary post-modern conflicts lies a set of political claims which are typically formulated in terms of self-determination. Claims to self-determination must be understood and appreciated as such.

I want to make two points at this stage. One concerns the role of law in conflict negotiations. Law represents an independent constraining dimension. The second is that I want to address the future and not the past. I do want to stress here the legal-institutional dimension of the claims underlying the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict as well as other conflicts in the region. It is vital to understand this legal-institutional dimension if we are to understand possible remedies. As far as the first point is concerned it must be said that attempts to use the law have not been very encouraging in regard to regulating the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict. It is an extremely well papered conflict. An endless series of legal instruments have been employed from the beginning of 1993 onwards, with very little to show for it. There has been a considerable involvement of the international community as guarantors of the peace process and as signatories to the instruments, which does not say great deal about the value of law in regulating conflicts. However the relationship between law and conflict and between a lawyer and a politician has to be properly understood. There is a division of labour between law and politics and between politicians and lawyers. Bargaining always takes place under the shadow of law and law imposes constraints and conditions on the parties, defining what is permissible and what is not, what is within the parameters of the possible. It also enables and provides solutions, approaches, techniques and devices. But politics simultaneously sets limits to law. Sometimes it instrumentalizes it, sometimes it simply uses it as a cloak or even determines it.

A number of people have talked about frozen conflicts and some have criticized the use of the term frozen conflicts. I think it is a mistake to equate frozen conflicts with unregulated conflicts. The Abkhazian conflict is certainly regulated in myriad ways
even if the resolution of the underlying claims, the major claims – the return of the DPs and the status of Abkhazia – remains deferred. The status quo is legally structured and grounded and perhaps therefore may prove somewhat more robust in the long term than people suspect. That is not to say that law has been used either at all imaginatively or creatively, in this conflict. This brings me to my other point, the legal-institutional nature of the claim itself and of any eventual remedy. The Abkhazian conflict and indeed Georgian-Abkhazian relations in general are grounded not just in a lengthy interethnic history but also in a specific legal-institutional context, namely Soviet ethno-territorialism or ethno-territorial federalism and nationalities policy. There is a tendency to repress or deny the Soviet institutional legacy, which I think is unfortunate and which is for the most part an ideological effect, a kind of post-communist anti-communism. However I think the force of the Soviet institutional legacy, though rarely reckoned with, is profound. For better or worse, the structures of governance everywhere in the region were created and institutionalized by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The nature, contours, configuration and borders of the contemporary Georgian polity, including its breakaway regions, owe a great deal to the legal imagination and designs of Lenin and Stalin and the same is true for every other place in the region. Abkhazia inherited a jurisdiction with developed structures of administration and governance. The conflict has been about the control and the status or nature of that jurisdiction. But the fact that it exists, that it developed over seventy years of Soviet rule and has been able to develop in novel directions following the Soviet collapse must be grasped and appreciated. The Abkhazians already have a state. It is not a sovereign, independent one, but they do have state machinery and they have developed it. They have not developed it enough, not in an ideal direction, and it may not prove feasible to develop it as an independent state. But the fact that it hasn’t been developed along ideal lines is not solely the fault of the political situation that has arisen there or of the Abkhazians themselves. Once again, this is not to say that I think such a state ought to be independent or ought not eventually to constitute a part of a larger Georgian federal state, but rather to say that there has been a comprehensive failure, especially on the part of the international community, which I hold especially culpable in this regard, to engage with the s claim either politically or legally. There has been a failure to assist civil society and government capacity building. Four outcomes are conceivable there:

- Integration with Georgia as an autonomous part of a federation
- Integration with Russia as a subject of the Russian Federation
- Perpetuation of the status quo indefinitely, à la Taiwan
- Independent statehood

Whichever of these four ultimately comes to pass, Abkhazian governance capacity will need to be strengthened and developed.

Oksana Antonenko raised the issue of human rights and of the need to pay attention to protecting the rights of people residing on the territories of the secessionist entities. I want to take that point further and say that it is necessary to reckon with the structures of governance in those territories such as they are and the degree to which they institutionalize human rights. There has been a glaring disproportion in the distribution of development assistance resources, to the detriment of all parties including Georgians. The ostracizing and isolation of Abkhazia has been in no one’s interests, including Russians’ and it is certainly not in the interests of the Abkhazians themselves, the Georgians or the international community. Georgia rightfully boasts a host of international well-wishers and celebrants of its significant and demonstrable progress in democratization. But there is no comparable interest in Abkhazia, no comparable engagement. Mention has been made of the elections and I want to
touch on that subject again briefly because I think the absence of international interest in the Abkhazian elections is telling. Unlike Ukraine or Kyrgyzstan, or here in Georgia, there was no revolution, and I am perfectly willing to acknowledge the problems with enfranchising the electorate and with the conduct of the elections. Nonetheless it is interesting that the Abkhazian elections conformed far better to the norm of elections in established democracies, that is a contest between different visions of the future among parties representing different constituencies, than they did in the other cases mentioned. The latter were reported, rightly or wrongly, as elections about elections, elections about the democratic political process between the forces of democracy and anti-democratic forces.

This ostracizing or isolating of Abkhazia has meant that the practical field of manoeuvre has been effectively conceded to Russia. Abkhazia’s status as a de facto Russian protectorate is not simply a result of Russian machinations, post Soviet designs, inherited from Soviet designs, inherited in turn from Romanov designs. The Russian cultural and economic monopoly in Abkhazia was not inevitable and it reflects in significant measure the missing of an opportunity by the international community.

Russians as a rule do not do development assistance. The amount of development assistance that has been provided to Abkhazia has been minimal, apart from the hard core – ICRC, Conciliation Resources, Médecins sans Frontières – a handful of humanitarian organisations. As a result, I think the prospects for resolution are rather dimmer today than even five or ten years ago, because of the deep levels of mistrust that have to be overcome with regard not only to the Georgians but also to the international community. There is no experience, no perception of the international community in Abkhazia except as partisans of one side in the conflict.

I want to make it clear that I am not an advocate for the Abkhazian side here. I am simply arguing that it should get an adequate hearing. From a critical legal standpoint, the conflict is articulated in the wrong terms and there is a need to re-characterize it – to get out of the rut of describing it in terms of a claim for territorial reintegration versus a claim for independent sovereignty. With a sufficient application of legal imagination and ingenuity – notably lacking so far – the issue could be re-characterized as one of renegotiating terms of political association between neighbouring jurisdictions with a long and complicated history. This is a formula that offers a way beyond maximalism. In a way addressing the final status question is not only premature but more premature now than it was formerly. Nonetheless, there have been a number of encouraging developments, particularly on the Georgian political front. Although there are still many obstacles to be overcome there is a new generation of politicians, some occupying posts of authority and influence, who are progressive and forward-thinking and prepared to engage seriously with the Abkhazians. I think there is a recognition that the government in exile has not proved a particularly useful structure.

All of that conceded, there is still a lack of vision at the top levels of leadership. There have so far been no dramatic policy shifts and no new initiatives, and indeed there has been a kind of return to coded maximalism and an emphasis on territorial integration rather than reconciliation, or pluralism, or reinventing the Georgian state, or whatever other phrase one might choose to adopt. The mistrust that certainly exists on the Abkhazian side hampers progress, and I hold the elites on both sides responsible, because the preparation and education of constituencies and electorates is ultimately the responsibility of elites.
I started by blaming the international community. I would like to say that there do seem to be some hopeful signs on that front, particularly in the willingness of the EU to engage in a more comprehensive and serious manner than before, and there seems to be considerable readiness for that in the region. Once it begins work on overcoming the residual levels of mistrust in Abkhazia, it has a better chance of playing a useful role as intermediary and interlocutor than any other international actor.

Charles King, Ion Ratiu Associate Professor, School of Foreign Service and Department of Government, Georgetown University

The central point about these ‘frozen conflicts’, a term that has already been criticized here, is that they are absolutely in no sense but one, it seems to me, ‘frozen’. The only sense in which they are frozen is that the basic legal positions of the belligerent sides vis-à-vis the status of these territories has not changed significantly since ceasefires were declared. The societies of the secessionist entities have changed markedly. In some ways the leaderships of the secessionist entities have changed. In some ways the leaderships and policies of the recognized governments involved have changed, and as Suleymanov and Huseynova pointed out, the societies of the recognized entities are changing as well. The only thing that has remained the same is the basic bargaining position of the sides involved. If I also criticize the international community, it is in part because the international community’s involvement has helped to freeze the position of the belligerent sides. The four conflicts in the former Soviet Union, three in the Caucasus and one in Moldova, are not unique but they are unusual in terms of the role played by the international community. We have the bizarre situation in which before any negotiations have begun the international community has already taken a position on the final outcome of the conflict. Secondly, they have taken a position on the final outcome which is at odds with the military reality. That is to say there has been a clear military winner in every single one of these four conflicts. That clear military winner was the secessionist party, assisted whether by the Russian Federation, by Armenia, by expatriate Armenians, by mountain peoples from the North Caucasus or by other external parties. Whatever the case, the international community has been at odds with that winner, however reasonable its motivation. It is therefore extremely difficult to envisage practical steps that could be taken at the strategic level because over the long term that would require that some of the basic elements in the conflict be changed, and I cannot see any reason why any of the parties involved would want to go along with that. I do not see the OSCE agreeing, nor the United Nations, nor the Russian Federation. One entity that might be prepared for change is the United States, and I have been asked to consider that question. Let me make four very brief points on that score:

1) This comment concerns mainly Georgia, and also Azerbaijan. The most important element in the context for the United States’ involvement in these conflicts now is Iraq and the GWOT – the global war on terror. Inevitably the United States’ policy in the South Caucasus must take into account the role of Georgia and the role of Azerbaijan in Iraq. The contribution of the Georgian soldiers serving bravely in Iraq is relatively small in military terms. However, it is huge in political terms, as every member of the Washington administration, particularly in the Defence Department and the White House, is well aware. It is critical to have Georgia involved, especially as over the last six months or so things appear to have been going badly in Iraq. So long as Georgia is involved there is the real appearance of a major coalition effort. During the last presidential debate, when he was asked by John Kerry whether there
was in fact a coalition fighting in Iraq, President Bush’s response was: ‘What about Poland?’ Now he might well say, ‘What about Georgia?’ In other words, Georgia is a fundamental participant in the international coalition.

2) In Washington there is a great divide – a bureaucratic divide in some ways and a divide between personalities in other ways – over the basic issue of the United States’ role in the South Caucasus, especially with regard to policy towards Georgia. In agency terms the divide is essentially between the State Department and the Defence Department. Much more critical versions of what has been happening in Georgia’s domestic politics after the Rose Revolution emanate from the State Department than from Defence Department officials. Of course Georgia is only a part of US foreign policy, but there is a real internal debate going on around it: when it comes to assessing what is happening under Saakashvili different perspectives emerge. It seems likely that over time the Defence Department view will become more influential compared to the current State Department view. The recent appointment of John Hillen as Assistant Secretary of State for political-military affairs is in my view very important for US policy in different parts of the world, and particularly in the South Caucasus. Hillen’s background and some of his previous writings confirm his preference for adopting a much more strategic vision of what the United States should do around the world rather than involving itself in the internal dynamics of conflicts. His well-known article published several years ago, ‘Great Powers Don’t Do Windows’, argued that great powers such as the United States should not get involved in the muck and mire of ethnic, territorial and secessionist conflicts. Instead they should think much more strategically. The nature of the United States’ strategic interests in Georgia and in Azerbaijan suggests that its involvement in these conflicts will be shaped much more by Georgia’s role in Iraq and the GWOT.

3) There have been some significant changes in the United States’ perspectives on conflicts around the world. There has been a growing impatience factor in Washington too concerning unresolved conflicts. It was surprising how long Kosovo remained unmentioned in our discussions here. What happens in Kosovo, particularly the turn in US thinking about its future (envisaging it as more or less independent over the next two or three years, I would imagine) is likely to have a profound impact, not necessarily on the outcomes of conflicts in this part of the world, but on the way in which the belligerents speak about conflict here. It seems to me that an important shift in international policy in future, if Kosovo is the model, will be towards speaking about the issue of ‘standards before status’, thinking seriously about how to build workable, responsive, legitimate, functional state institutions in the conflict zones before talking about what the final status should be. For fifteen years we have been talking about what the final status should be. Should it be federal? What kind of federal? Confederal? This has been a recipe for no movement whatsoever in the negotiating process, if anything simply entrenching positions, and making it more difficult to reach a solution. Whatever the future status of Karabakh, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, there will have to be functioning governments there. Someone will have to ensure electricity and water supplies, collect rubbish and organize a police force that can provide some degree of security for the population. It seems much more reasonable to consider such matters first, before what the final status is going to be, and Kosovo could be a model for that.
Roy Allison, Head, Russia and Eurasia Programme, Chatham House, London

In regard to the European Union, I think it is fair to say that with enlargement after 2007, it will have a new border on the Black Sea, and the Caucasus, and the problems that emanate from that region will clearly directly affect the EU. The core issue here is how the EU can affect the climate and conditions of settlement talks in the region. I am not talking here about direct participation, but about how the EU can shape and influence the climate around the talks. The EU Special Representative in the South Caucasus, Ambassador Talviti, seems to have been trying to establish the EU as a partner alongside the OSCE co-chairs in seeking to resolve the Karabakh conflict. He hopes that the EU can play an independent supporting role, assisting the co-chairs of the Minsk Process and adding value in one way or another. His feeling is that in respect of South Ossetia and Abkhazia the EU can also only play a supporting role. He has raised the issue of supporting the development of the road system in Karabakh. I think he and other EU officials generally recognize that there are both co-operative and competitive elements in the EU-NATO-Russia relationship in the South Caucasus. With Georgia having received particular attention recently after the €125m of funds pledged at the June 2005 Donors Conference, there is a feeling that more can be done.

The EU belief is that in the longer term, the EU structure will be more important than American or Russian structures for Georgia, but that in the short term the situation is a bit different. In the short term, the United States is very important. In the EU view, if the US priority for Georgia changes or reduces, then it could have a significant effect quite quickly. So the EU is more of a long-term player. NATO meanwhile is viewed as having the same function as it did for Eastern Europe in many respects. I think the current weak EU engagement in the region is reflected in the outcome of the debate about options for replacing the OSCE Georgia border-monitoring operation. The weakest option was adopted in April, sending just three experts to work in Tbilisi and to make periodic trips to the border. This was not just the fault of the EU. The Russian opposition to anything much stronger than that played a large role, but nonetheless this was the outcome.

Coming back to the question, can an EU strategy for the South Caucasus be developed that can really affect the climate and conditions in which settlement talks occur, to some extent I think so. It would need new policies in regard to the conflicts, the region and the states in it. I will make some comments about possible new steps:

• Commissioning a new needs assessment study of Lower Gali in the Abkhazian region
• Commissioning a needs assessment in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and contributing to the opening up of these territories to the presence and activities of the international community
• Expanding the EU’s role in South Ossetia in terms of the scale and ambitions of rehabilitation programmes and taking a more active role in the Joint Control Commission
• Exploring the possibility of similar targeted rehabilitation programmes in the Lower Gali and Zugdidi regions of Georgia
• Assuming a leading role in fostering sustainable development in the Dzhavahete region of Georgia and providing support in this area to the comprehensive programme developed by the OSCE High Commission for National Minorities.

More broadly, the EU could further develop its South Caucasus Anti-Drug Programme with UNDP-enhanced state-led projects and region-wide anti-drug cooperation. It could conduct assessments of the need for security sector reforms in the South Caucasus states starting with the border guards and including the border services of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Finally the EU should seek to foster cross-conflict and regional civil society contacts and exchanges. A whole list of possible areas of activity could be drawn up, none of them particularly controversial.

Finally, I will say a few words about Russia and NATO. It is clear that NATO recognizes the South Caucasus as a strategically important region. This was reinforced at the June 2004 Istanbul-NATO summit. NATO’s concerns here no doubt include fears that the region could act as a transit zone for trafficking activities, and that terrorists could perhaps exploit weak states. NATO has an interest in maintaining energy security. There are fears that conflicts in the region could further destabilize the wider area, and the region’s role as a corridor between the current NATO area and Central Asia is an issue. Finally, NATO is aware of the proximity of the region to both the Black Sea and the Middle East. All this brings the South Caucasus under NATO scrutiny, as NATO widens the scope of its strategic concerns and develops potential global missions. It is an organisation in transition from something much more regionally Europe-focused to something far beyond that. On the other hand from a NATO perspective, it is difficult to accept that Georgia or Azerbaijan, the two states interested in NATO accession, are in a position now, or that they will be in the near future, to contribute much to security. They still have problems of internal security, unresolved conflicts, inadequately reformed security sectors and weak institutions. These deficiencies count for more, for example, than the current military contribution to Iraq being made by Georgia, even though that demonstrates a lot of good will.

Despite some hopes in Azerbaijan that NATO might play a more successful role in conflict resolution than the OSCE has so far been able to do, it is clear that NATO itself will not directly assume responsibility for regulating the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict. This was made quite clear recently by Bob Simmons, the Special Representative for Central Asia and South Caucasus, when he said that NATO does not participate directly in conflict resolution and is not discussing locating its peacekeeping forces in the region. So that is quite categorical. At the same time, it is recognized that Russia’s backing is essential for successful resolution of the conflicts. NATO cannot realistically accept Georgia and Azerbaijan as members until the territorial disputes are settled. This creates a basic dilemma which has been spelt out by officials and analysts, namely that Russia could use its support for separatist regimes to veto the entry into the Alliance of South Caucasus countries. Western observers have been concerned about this and some have been saying specifically that Abkhazia and South Ossetia should not be turned into obstacles that could block Georgia’s NATO ambitions, in other words that solutions there should not be a precondition for NATO membership, so that Russia cannot acquire a kind of on/off switch by exploiting those conflicts. The discussion about this continues.

Finally I want to make just a few comments about Russia itself and its interests. Clearly Russia is an indispensable part of any sustainable conflict resolution in the South Caucasus, but it is not at all clear that this is a goal to which Putin’s security establishment is committed. That is the key question. The Georgian Defence Minister
had a meeting with the US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld last month, where he said he had been telling his American colleagues that Russia is the decision maker in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and that more effort should be made to make Russia realize that these conflicts do not benefit Russia at all. This kind of appeal for US intercession is understandable, but I think it also carries risks, because it raises the geopolitical stakes on events in the South Caucasus at a time of greater anti-Western sentiment in the Russian security elite in general. The prospect of a Russian-American cooperative security approach to the region seems to me distant. The agreement by Russia to close its bases in Batumi by the end of 2002 is some kind of a breakthrough, but Russian influence in the region remains very significant. One should not feel that it is ebbing away. Suggestions that some 40 per cent of the Russian military equipment in Georgia is being relocated to Armenia have provoked some concerns in Azerbaijan. There are also questions about the character of the Georgian-Russian anti-terrorist centre that is meant to be set up after separate negotiations, concerns that it could create some kind of loophole for a continued Russian military presence in Georgia. Alternatively, could it provide a basis for a common agenda also for Russian-American cooperation given the progress that has been achieved on a range of counter-terrorist initiatives between Moscow and Washington, bilaterally and also multilaterally in the Russia-NATO Council? There are two alternatives. I would say in conclusion that unfortunately the idea of cooperative security which is the ideal approach to reconciliation of interests between the parties and the main powers still seems unlikely. At present Russian officials are lining up to accuse Washington of supporting what they describe as ‘anti-constitutional actions’ in successive coloured revolutions in CIS states. So I think the political basis for reconciling American and Russian interests throughout the region is absent. The political trends reinforce tendencies towards geopolitical pluralism and geostrategic uncertainty rather than towards reconciliation.

Maxim Yusin, Head, Foreign Affairs Desk, Izvestia

In yesterday’s discussion it seemed to me that the word ‘Russia’ was the second most often used word after the word ‘Georgia’. I heard a lot of interesting things about my country, a lot of new things about its politics and a lot of unexpected things. We evidently live in multiple informational dimensions and we have to understand this. We should not see conspiracies here. For instance, it was said that there is an information campaign against Georgia in Russia, but as a representative of a leading newspaper I can say that there is no such plot or campaign. If I say that our bilateral relations are in a sad state, it will not be a great revelation. However we should try to understand the reasons and find ways out of this dead-end. It is especially sad that relations are so bad after the hopes that were raised when Mikhail Saakashvili came to power. The period after the arrival of Saakashvili and his team was a period of lost opportunities, disappointed hopes and broken illusions. There were indeed illusions and hopes at the beginning, because Saakashvili made a remarkable start in relations with Russia. His first approach to Russia was the offer of a handshake, which remained only an offer, because in the end there were no handshakes. Then there was the unilateral cancellation of the old visa regime. It now takes a Russian citizen only two minutes to get a visa at the border. Even after that, your President showed resolve and did not go back on his word when Moscow failed to come up with a response. I remember those days of the Rose Revolution in Georgia, when Saakashvili was in fashion in liberal circles of Moscow. I remember how he used to visit a few of the most elite liberal groups for informal discussions, and how he was
invited to speak on Ekho Moskvy, the most liberal radio station. Even in the most nationalistic circles it was difficult to criticize him. However the honeymoon did not last beyond 6 months, despite the results that were achieved during that period. For example the peaceful solution of the Ajaria crisis depended partly on good will which would not have been there if Saakashvili had not demonstrated it first. Then the climate began to change, and now we are back where we started. The critical moment came with the events in Ukraine.

Questions have been posed – why does Russia treat us badly, why does it behave as a hostile state, why is it blocking our way to territorial unity? I completely understand your concerns, and no doubt they are the main reason why I am speaking here. There is no smoke without fire, however. We must look at how your president is behaving on the world scene. He has acquired a new image, as a champion in the fight against imperialism. There is no need to ask, of course, exactly which Empire he is fighting against. Sometimes it is mentioned, and sometimes not. At the GUUAM meeting in Chisinau, he proposed including Belarus into the list of countries likely to experience a ‘coloured’ revolution, and despite the efforts of the Moldovan and Ukrainian presidents the damage was done.

This dashing young anti-imperialist persona looks different to Russians. Declarations came from the Georgian side, along the lines of, ‘You [Russians] don’t understand the Caucasus as we do. Please do not interfere in our relations, you will only make things worse.’ I could say the same thing about our relationship with Ukraine. Caucasians cannot, by definition, understand Russia’s relationship with Ukraine as well as they understand Caucasian relations. Other people cannot imagine the pain we have felt as a result of the separation from Ukraine. Relations between Russians and Ukrainians are not the same as between Russians and Georgians. We do not think of a marriage between a Russian and a Ukrainian as an international marriage. When I hear a surname with a ‘dz’ in it, I realize that it is a Georgian surname, but when I hear ‘Petrenko’ or ‘Ivanenko’ I never ask myself the question, they are one of ours. So, here we have a dynamic, energetic President, who sees fit to make the most undiplomatic statements in public and in private. Of course there are no secrets in the world of diplomacy. Someone associated with the presidential administration in Russia recently asked me whether I thought President Saakashvili believed that whatever he says to President Yushchenko about Putin and about Russia stays secret. Those statements do reach our ears, and we know that this man has chosen to take on the image of a fighter against the Empire. How would you expect another president to react if he was at the receiving end of such statements? In a situation where Georgia is posing as the main force opposing Russian influence in the post-Soviet space it is scarcely logical to expect Russia to cooperate with it to resolve Caucasian conflicts. If one ignores the substantial emotional factors in relations between Russia and Georgia, it would seem that there are no real reasons to have such poor relations, but unfortunately emotions are involved, and there is no point in cherishing illusions. Russian public opinion towards Georgia is negative, and if, God forbid, there were to be an attempt to solve the conflicts here by force, then I would not exclude the danger of Russia’s involvement, either directly or indirectly.

There were debates earlier here on whether conflicts should stay frozen. I would like to be optimistic and to hope that after a certain period of time, perhaps with a change of administration in Russia, relations will change and conflicts will melt. However if one party takes a decision to unfreeze these conflicts by unilateral action, there might be serious consequences. Although it is your territory and you have the right to decide how to proceed, I think it would be wiser to be patient and to try gradually to improve relations.
Roy Reeve, Head of Mission, OSCE, Tbilisi

My first point is that it is clear that many of the security problems on the ground could be resolved through more effective cooperation between police and other law enforcement bodies rather than using the military JPKF set up. We are now moving gently forward to an agreement between Ministries of the Interior, to coordinate their activities more closely, and, we hope, to take up an opportunity provided through the OSCE joint police training scheme, to undertake joint police operations in the conflict zone. At the moment that is held up because of continuing investigations into the murders and disappearances of the last few weeks but there are prospects that we may see increased and enhanced law-enforcement operations on the ground, and that can be only regarded as a major step forward.

A second way forward, mentioned by Roy Allison, is to do an economic needs assessment. There was agreement in Moscow two weeks ago to an OSCE-funded, led and initiated three-month economic needs assessment study looking at possible redevelopment of the areas affected by the Georgian-Ossetian conflict. This would not be restricted to the conflict zone itself but would look too at surrounding areas including North Ossetia and in the Russian Federation, to see what might be achieved through working with national and international experts, in order to draw up a credible economic and infrastructure development plan and then to seek international funding for implementation.

That in turn builds upon another economic development activity, which also involved the return of refugees – again a critical factor in conflict resolution in Ossetia. The EC gave the OSCE mission some €2.5m, originally five years ago, but we managed to start spending it last year, for economic infrastructure development and the return of refugees. Our implementing partners there are the UNHCR and UNDP, and despite the background of tension created by continual outbreaks of fighting in the last few months, we have managed to implement that project extremely well and it will be concluded before the end of this year, which again in turn creates some confidence among the population. With the removal of the smuggling and contraband operations which were the excuse for last year’s operations, there is some prospect of economic development and of income-generating activities taking place affecting the people concerned. The removal of the wholesale market, although laudable as part of the anti-smuggling, anti-contraband operation, brought instant economic hardship to individuals in the villages. We have to find a way of giving them some economic stake in their future.

At the same time as we have been working on law enforcement and economic development, the mission has carried on its military monitoring role, which I understand was recognized yesterday. That is hindered to a large extent by our inability with the consensus rules of the OSCE to increase the number of our military monitors on the ground and to extend their ability to look at events outside the zone of conflict, particularly as regards the area north of Schembali towards the mountain passes. That is an ambition that we still have. We would very much like to be able to move outside the frame we are stuck in at the moment, but that would require a consensus decision from our political masters in Vienna, which at the moment, following the dismantling of the border monitoring operation to which Roy Allison referred, is not in prospect.
We have therefore focused on civil society development and I think this is one of the key factors in attempting to rebuild confidence between the communities, which was totally shattered as a result of last summer's events. Together with a number of international partners, we are operating somewhere in the region of 50-60 grassroots projects within the conflict zone, trying to develop civil society organisations. We are conducting human rights training, and education for children, we are looking at ways of opening up societies in that region to broader information flows. We have put in internet cybercafes, so that through satellite links people can now have access to the world at large, and escape from the otherwise total domination or monopoly of the state-controlled media in South Ossetia.

The overall objective has to be a peaceful comprehensive resolution of the conflict. In that regard the statements made by President Saakashvili at the UN General Assembly last year and at Strasbourg this year at least provide a framework and an outline for moving forward. We will be discussing in more detail in Batumi where I am going this weekend some of the ideas and concepts contained in that approach. What is somewhat discouraging is that that document has not yet been formally handed over to the South Ossetian authorities or even to the Russian Federation as a step towards developing the various ideas and proposals contained within it. It would also be very helpful to hear some background thinking from the Georgian side which would develop and flesh out the various areas, the various functions which that speech refers to. I hope that we make progress at Batumi this weekend. So, we stay committed to providing whatever we can in the way of political, financial and other resources, to move forward on a comprehensive peaceful approach to the resolution of the conflict. I am working with the parties concerned.

In the course of the past five years we have managed to gain inclusion in the JCC negotiating framework. The remarks made yesterday about the three-to-one basis of that are well taken. Apart from ourselves the European Commission now sits on it. Ambassador Talviti has occasionally surfaced at meetings there and I would welcome an increased and enhanced EU role, as opposed to a European Commission role, in these discussions. But clearly there is not yet agreement within the Union between the Member States as to whether they are prepared to let Ambassador Talviti take that step, for the same reasons that the EU was not able to fill the vacuum in the border monitoring operation. I think there is still resistance among some countries, which consider that it would be seen as confrontational in their bilateral relations with the Russian Federation if they were to take too high a profile in conflict resolution in the Caucasus.

Romualds Razuks, South Caucasus Liaison Officer, NATO

This presentation consists of an analysis of what has changed in the policy of NATO and of how NATO has changed. I have tried to consider also what use politicians and leaders in the Caucasus could make of these changes. So I shall trace the new features of the NATO Partnership policy, to outline a perspective for what future cooperation and especially the IPAP (Individual Partnership Action Plan) framework could deliver.

As we all know, NATO’s Partnership programme now has a record lasting more than ten years, and it has had tangible successes. Many partners have already joined NATO. At the same time, the overall situation has deteriorated and challenges to Euro-Atlantic security are coming from the periphery of the Euro-Atlantic area. This of
course means Afghanistan and other matters that NATO is dealing with now. That is why NATO as an international organisation has come to the conclusion that stability and security cannot be achieved simply by cooperation. The number of countries participating in the partnership process has increased, the circle has grown wider and wider. Then we have had the next wave – the Mediterranean dialogue in Istanbul. We have had the Istanbul cooperation initiatives, where the Middle East was involved. Those waves of cooperation were intended to bring greater stability and security, but now NATO has come to the view that cooperation is not enough to ensure stability and security: it requires also domestic reforms. NATO’s main message is that effective security cooperation is impossible without changes inside the partner countries, changes in basic doctrines and democratization of institutions.

The objectives of Partnership policy include political dialogue and practical cooperation. This in itself is not new. What is different now is that this political dialogue and practical cooperation are supported through the IPAP process. As you know Georgia has already had almost one year of IPAP experience. An interim assessment was carried out on 16 May. The Azerbaijan IPAP was approved at the end of May and the Armenian IPAP is also ready for presentation. So all three countries of the South Caucasus are advancing to a new level of partnership, using the Individual Partnership Action Plans. It is significant that the same rules of the game have been accepted by all three countries. NATO cannot do the work for those countries and NATO cannot resolve their conflicts. The fact that identical principles have been accepted by all three is the most important achievement recently in the region. The next thing, of course, is the reform process itself.

Reform means the promotion of democratic values and democratic structures. The framework of IPAP is being used to lay a foundation for modern defence systems, with civilian Ministries of Defence and democratic control of the military. The next thing is participation in NATO-led operations, with interoperability between partners and even such sophisticated units as the NATO Response Forces as the ultimate goal. Last but not least, these changes have not altered NATO’s open-door enlargement policy. NATO is open for new nations to join it. Georgia has already declared that its ultimate goal is to join NATO, and the door is open.

NATO announced on 28 June 2004 that the Caucasus and Central Asia were a number one priority in its policy of creating security and stability. This is very important. Now that many former Partners have joined NATO, we are able to allocate the human and material resources needed for better cooperation with the Caucasus. As paragraph 521 of the Istanbul Summit communiqué states, NATO now has a special representative in the Caucasus and Central Asia, and two liaison officers. I am the one responsible for the Caucasus and there is another in Central Asia. This is an important innovation. We never had such a representative in the Baltic states or in Eastern Europe. The main purpose, of course, is to support the Partnership process. So the Caucasus is now a geographical priority for NATO, and this priority is to be dealt with by using the various instruments of cooperation. Our task is to meet the needs of each of our partners, whether it be Georgia, Armenia or Azerbaijan. The dialogue is supported through the IPAP process, the reform process is assessed, and assistance is targetted better. The main tools are provided by the Partnership programmes. A relatively new instrument is the Planning Interview Process Against Terrorism, from the Prague and Defence Institution Building Programme which was launched in Istanbul. We are implementing too the NATO Trust Fund policy, to deal with environmental issues, and to dispose of unexploded ordnance and missiles.

As you all know, IPAP it is a priority for Georgia. It has four main chapters, dealing with:
• Political security and economic issues
• Defence and military issues, the main chapter
• Public information, science, environment and civil emergency planning issues
• Administrative issues

NATO’s anti-terrorism programme launched after 11 September embraces joint actions in the fight against terrorism, by allies and partners – operations, exercises and training, border security and management actions, exchange of information about the consequences of terrorist acts, and control over the spread of small arms and of portable defence systems. The new Defence Institution Building programme focuses on the central processes of defence reform, one of the aspects of creating security and stability. This programme embraces democratic control over defence, civilian participation in developing defence and security policy and legislation, arrangements and procedures to assess security risks and national defence requirements, compliance with international accepted norms, effective and transparent financial planning, resource allocation procedures, and effective management of defence spending. The Planning and Review process is a traditional framework for cooperation with NATO and it retains its usefulness. The key purpose remains that of fostering interoperability. But now, with the launching of IPAP, it has acquired a new function of supporting defence reform, and defence institution building to foster the fight against terrorism. These are the innovations in NATO Partnership policy here. The leading process, the absolute priority for Georgia, is IPAP.

DISCUSSION

Question 1 (Giorgi Khutsishvili): When Maxim Yusin commented that we have difficulties in understanding Russian-Ukrainian relations, he was referring to an issue of national identity and to the pain of divorce. We had this feeling when Abkhazia wanted to separate from Georgia, because Georgians were used to thinking of Abkhazia as part of their country. However the Abkhazians maintain that they are a different people and they do not want to have anything in common with Georgians. They even claim that they do not have anything in common with Georgia historically. We just have to live with it.

In the second half of the twentieth century there was a change in the understanding of the concept of nationality. At present, nobody in Georgia doubts that a people have a different ethnicity, and that they are a different nation, if that is what they think. However the thing is that that the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict has happened within one state, and the break-up and the ethnic cleansing of a part of the population from places where they lived for a long period of time do not constitute an inter-state but rather an intra-state issue. If we are speaking about the Abkhazian nation and the possibility of creating an independent state for it, the referendum to decide that cannot be legitimate if the voters are solely people who currently live on that territory. All the people who lived there before the start of the conflict should be able to vote.

When it comes to Ukraine, and the difference between Ukraine’s and Russia’s ethnos, it is a reality which is hard for Russians to accept. Ukraine is an independent country and an independent nation. Ukraine’s self awareness as an independent nation, despite the substantial history that it shares with Russia, is a historical reality.
So it is useful to point to these parallels between countries. They demonstrate that a nation becomes a nation if it has its own self-awareness and if it has the potential to develop on its own.

At the same time, there are differences between the Ukrainian and the Abkhazian cases. The Abkhazian case is about the division of a nation and a struggle within one nation. In Ukraine, on the other hand, the building of a national identity started a very long time ago, varying in intensity over time. The sense of identity in Ukraine is much stronger than the one of the Abkhazian people. It would be hard to prove that Ukrainians are the same people as Russians and do not have the right to self-determination. I think there is a historical logic which already exists, and Ukraine is developing in its own way.

I have a brief comment on OSCE Ambassador Reeve’s report, for which I thank him very much. He said that there were around fifty or sixty projects aimed at supporting civil society in South Ossetia. At the present there are almost no projects of this kind involving partnership with Georgian civil society organisations, although plans for such projects do exist. Our organisation presented such a project, and we have NGO partners on the Ossetian side, but it still has no funding.

**Question 2 (Ghia Nikolaishvili):** I want to say thank you to the OSCE Ambassador for the work that his organisation has done in Georgia. However, we would like to have more in future from the OSCE. We are following their activities in the conflict zone very closely. In difficult conditions mission officers are working at the limits of their capacities, but there are serious problems. The first thing I would like to see is an increase in the number of OSCE military observers in the conflict zone. If there were fifteen to twenty monitors, that would remove the possibility of small incidents passing off without any response.

In the second place, I would like to draw attention to the extent to which the *de facto* local leadership, mostly advised by the Russians, are trying to limit the activities of the OSCE mission in the conflict zone. They are even trying to stop the mission from acting unless accompanied by units of the JPKF. We have sufficient examples of serious incidents. Peacekeeping forces are advising the mission not to stop here, not to take photographs there, or not to mention a particular matter, because it might be dangerous for the mission’s members. This deserves a response at the international level. We will also try from our side to support the mission.

My third point is that all projects directed at rehabilitating the conflict zone, for example covering economic, humanitarian and other aspects, should take into consideration the needs of all parts of the population there. When internet access is made available to the local *de facto* leadership they use it as a tool in their struggle against the legitimate Georgian government. The Georgian population should benefit too from these projects. It would be interesting if a discussion of this issue could be arranged involving the Foreign Ministry, and other Ministries, and decisions reached.

To Maxim Yusin I must say that when I was talking yesterday about the destructive role being played by Russia, I intended to say that Russia has been playing a destructive role for the last fourteen years. So please do not claim that the reason for Russia’s actions is something our President said recently. You are playing with this territory and with our nation, and I think the Ossetian people too will understand this in time. If you are interested, as we are, in having good bilateral relations, you must also make steps towards us. As for your comment about media campaigns, you are quite correct. We have learned how to wage this kind of campaign in Russia, how to use political levers. At least that is better than using military, destructive methods.
**Question 3:** I would like to comment on Roy Allison’s presentation and on the role of international and sub-regional organisations in resolving the current conflicts in the South Caucasus. I would particularly like to reflect on the role of GUUAM, which he mentioned in his presentation. I do not know about conflicts on the territory of Georgia, but in the case of the conflict that my country, Armenia, is involved in I would naturally have reservations regarding the involvement of GUUAM. In our minds GUUAM could scarcely be impartial. As experience shows it is an alliance or a group of countries that have particular interests in how the conflict is resolved. Although we have excellent bilateral relations with other countries in GUUAM, I cannot see a realistic prospect of GUUAM having a role in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Secondly, as regards the EU, I believe that its role in the resolution of the current conflicts should be enhanced and strengthened to the maximum extent possible. This is something that we are very much looking forward to. You mentioned an increase in Ambassador Talviti’s role. I think it should be considered now, particularly in the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process in the OSCE Minsk Group. France is representing the EU in one way or another, but it should be considered seriously whether Ambassador Talviti could represent the entire EU community and whether this would have a positive effect by introducing a new, fresh spirit. It is worth considering whether France should be replaced or whether Ambassador Talviti should participate in a new capacity and strengthen the process.

Regarding your point on the needs assessment mission to the occupied territories, I would make a distinction between the occupied territories and Nagorno-Karabakh. But it was not clear to me what you believed the focus of the EU needs assessment mission should be. I think that if there is to be one it should focus on the needs of the local population, or on the next stages of conflict resolution. I would like to commend your point on the EU’s role in the Dzavakhetiya region of Georgia. We believe that its activities should be stepped up, with the support of the OSCE High Commissioner, for the benefit of the local population, and in particular for creating employment there, especially after the Russian military withdrawal. Finally, Azerbaijan and Georgia’s IPAP programmes were mentioned. I would like to inform you that Armenia submitted an IPAP at the beginning of June, and that it has come into operation. So as far as this is concerned all three South Caucasus states are on an equal footing.

**Question 4 (Stepan Safaryan):** I also have a question for Roy Allison. I am interested in your view concerning GUUAM’s role in conflict settlement in Transdnestria.

**Question 5 (Hijran Huseynova):** My question refers to comments from Ambassador Reeve and Romualds Razaks about Russia’s role in the region. Russia itself has a right to pose questions, for example about the indefinite enlargement of NATO and the EU. This touches closely on the interests of Russia, which has been present in the region for a long period of time, and plays an important role in both Georgia and Armenia. It is clear that any sort of conflict would have very serious consequences for Russia, especially taking into account that there are a lot of its people living here. The Russian interest is understandable. Russia is trying hard to take its place among the democratic countries on the world arena. Let us clear up what kind of threat Russia poses, and perhaps maybe even give the opportunity to Russia to respond.

**Question 6:** It has been proposed that it may be dangerous to ‘unfreeze’ some of the conflicts in the region. First of all, conflicts are never really frozen. This is just an
arbitrary description of them. One cannot ask politicians to freeze or unfreeze conflicts. The most important thing with conflicts is how to resolve them. I do understand the concerns of people who warn against unfreezing. Of course trying to solve conflicts by force could destabilize the whole region. However each side has its own view. For example, when the Russian side argues against unfreezing conflicts, this reflects its actual behaviour in the conflicts, and is directed at strengthening its own position in the region. I think that everyone here is well aware of what Russia’s policies towards Abkhazia and South Ossetia are and why it proposes not unfreezing the conflicts in them.

**Question 7 (Oksana Antonenko):** I have a question for Ambassador Reeve. First of all I would like to say that many of us often criticize the OSCE or the role of the mediators, but having watched from inside what is happening in the region, I have to say that the OSCE is really doing an excellent job. However, while you said a lot about the JCC and the important decisions that it has taken about running needs assessments, police cooperation, and setting up a special coordination centre, it seems to me that many of those decisions are not being implemented. The JCC has acquired a culture of acceptance of non-implementation of its decisions. Is there any way to develop a more public monitoring process, which would actually monitor to what extent JCC decisions are being implemented or not. At the moment there is very little information. Sometimes we can only have access to JCC protocols and often they tell us very little. I am particularly worried about this needs assessment mission, which I think is very important and which is not mentioned in the JCC protocol. It looks as if it might not actually be implemented, for a variety of reasons. There is so much resistance now on the ground. We know what has happened in the last three days. So is there any way that a public body, not necessarily the OSCE, could monitor what the JCC is doing? How can we promote that idea?

**Response from Roy Allison:** There were a couple of questions on GUUAM. Some scepticism was expressed about the role of GUUAM in the South Caucasus. I think if you stand back and look at the experience of sub-regional organisations in other parts of the world, it has tended to be the case that those with members which are in some ways parties to the conflict do not find it easy to develop a workable solution. This has generally been the view of the UN for quite a long time, when it comes to supporting regional actions. The UN has tried to devolve some responsibilities according to the principles of subsidiarity, but it has been aware of the problems of devolving to organisations which contain states which are parties to conflicts. At a wider regional level it is sometimes possible, and the Organisation for African Unity is case in point. But I think that this is a problem for GUUAM.

On the specific question about the proposal on Transdnestria, that is a very good example, because the Ukrainian proposal was only presented to the Moldovan side, without any prior consultation with any GUUAM country or indeed with any other country, such as the United States, on 18 April, just a few days before the meeting took place. So there was no opportunity for feedback or consultation, it was a unilateral démarche. It was not surprising that it caused some difficulties at the summit. There is no need to go into the details of the proposal, but the actual process was not one which was likely to help in getting acceptance. You need at least to be able to discuss the details to come to some consensus beforehand.

Finally, the needs assessment issue. Here I was referring essentially to the occupied territories beyond the Karabakh region. These are only proposals and ideas which I think need, or could be considered. Needs assessment would look at the practical economic circumstances and what might be done in this respect, because at the
moment these regions are not really accessible to the activities of the international community even in practical ways.

Response from Roy Reeve: I want to respond to Oksana Antonenko’s remarks about possible NGO monitoring of JCC decisions. That is an excellent idea, if you can find me the kind of civil society organisations which will keep the authorities on both sides up to the mark. I would welcome that. I am much more optimistic about the economic needs assessment than you are because I think we are already just about there and we should have it launched during the next three or four weeks. This proposal has the kind of momentum which even the JCC would not be able to resist. It has the additional advantage of involving the United States in a practical project on the ground.

The drawbacks and shortcomings of the OSCE mentioned by Ghia Nikolaishvili are not drawbacks and shortcomings of the mission here. I am well aware that a lot of issues depend on Vienna and on the consensus rule of operation of the organisation, which we all have to work with in our own way. As for the other questions raised on the role of Russia and everything else, they are extremely important, and since I must leave now I would prefer to invite people to come and talk to me separately about that.

Response from Romualdas Razuks: In reply to the question posed by Mrs Huseynova about NATO enlargement and whether the Partnership process endangers Russia and violates Russian interests, I would say that I think not. For me, as a NATO official, the answer is very simple. NATO is very satisfied with its dialogue with Russia in the framework of the NATO-Russia Council. Russian diplomats and the Russian mission are an integral part of NATO headquarters now. It is also a comparatively new thing, which we never had before. So everything that is happening at the geopolitical level is discussed with Russian colleagues in Brussels. Here we should stress one other thing: NATO does not consider the Caucasus countries as being part of its close neighbourhood or sphere of interests, and those things are and will be discussed with Russia. Nevertheless, the decisions of those nations, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, will be discussed on a bilateral basis with those countries. If Georgia desires and is on the path to NATO membership, we will discuss the matter with Georgia bilaterally. We do not see that this process threatens Russia in any way, because the very process of partnership, whether PfP or IPAP, brings security and stability to the region. This is at the heart of NATO thinking, and we do not think that it can endanger Russia. Stability and security in the neighbourhood of Russia is of benefit to Russia.

Response from Maxim Yusin: Oddly enough I must agree with everything Mr Khutsishvili said in his interesting presentation. When it comes to the hypothetical case of holding a referendum in Abkhazia about independence, everyone should indeed be involved, including the Georgian refugees. As for Ukraine, he was addressing not me but a hypothetical Russian, someone who is nostalgic about the Soviet Union. I was actually very happy when the Soviet Union disintegrated. I never thought of myself as a Soviet, and the disintegration has brought me back my homeland, and given me the opportunity to be proud of my flag and of our double-headed eagle. I was involved in the 1991 Moscow demonstrations in support of Lithuania. I know that Ukraine has gone for ever and I thank God for that. It is even more interesting to live as two separate countries because we can meet each other in these forums as representatives of our respective sides. My concern is not that Ukraine has gone, but that we should not have bad relations with independent Ukraine in the way we do with independent Georgia. It is painful for us to know that Mr Saakashvili is trying to pass on his negative feelings towards Russia to Mr
Yushchenko and to make Ukraine as antagonistic towards Russia as Georgia is. It is enough for us to have one such opponent. We can survive albeit with difficulty such bad relations with Georgia, but we cannot with Ukraine. We need to resolve our bilateral problems with each other and not involve external players like Ukraine. I was not talking about getting Ukraine back into a Union with Russia, but about the fact that it is very painful when such uncomfortable comparisons as Abkhazia with Ukraine are made.

As for my proposal not to unfreeze conflicts, I meant to say that we should not unfreeze a conflict if the process is going to involve the use of force. My message to my Georgian friends, taking into account the current situation, is to pause for a bit, even if your government wants to use force. It is a dangerous situation which could start a war, one into which, unfortunately, my country could be drawn. Give time to those who do not want a worsening of Russian-Georgian relations, so that the present nationalistic wave on both sides can subside. When that happens we can unfreeze the conflict, but not now.
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chair: Before we start on the concluding remarks, I would like to give the opportunity to Maria Van Reuten from the European Commission to say a few words.

Maria Van Reuten, Project Manager for EU Assistance in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, European Commission Delegation, Tbilisi

I want to come back to the presentation by Roy Allison, especially to the question of whether the EU can become an active partner in resolving conflicts in the region. Mr Allison addressed what could be EU strategy for developing of the role of the European Commission in supporting peaceful conflict resolution. He also made some suggestions about possible activities. He seems to have read our minds, because most of the points suggested by him are already part of a programme that is being implemented.

Let me first briefly explain that at the political level the European Council and Javier Solana’s office take the lead, and operate here through European Union Special Representative Talviti. The EU does not have a political mandate for South Ossetia and Abkhazia in the way that the OSCE or the UN have. Thus its direct involvement on the political level in conflict resolution is limited. As Roy Allison pointed out, Ambassador Talviti plays an independent role, however, supporting both the OSCE in South Ossetia and the UN in Abkhazia.

At the same time the European Commission is actively supporting the peace process and a peaceful resolution of the conflicts by means of its assistance programmes on the ground. These programmes are designed to benefit the population on both sides affected by the conflicts. This is mainly done through economic recovery programmes and programmes working with civil society. In South Ossetia the EC has been involved with economic recovery programmes since 1997. So far projects worth about €7.5m have been implemented, providing local infrastructure and shelter assistance, we hope creating conditions for DPs to return, and improved living conditions for people on both sides in the conflict zone. At present we are considering whether it might be possible to expand that assistance, but we have to take into account the rather tense and unstable situation on the ground. We are also looking forward to the OSCE-led economic needs assessment to help us in extending our work.

In Abkhazia the EC is supporting several new programmes. Until a year ago, its main involvement was in humanitarian assistance, and this is still going on. Now the needs assessment that Roy Allison referred to for Gali has become a reality. Last year, along with UN agencies, the Delegation made a comprehensive study of what could be done. Could an assistance programme be implemented? Was it possible to work in a region where several years ago the situation was too unstable and insecure? We came to the conclusion that this is a good time to develop programmes for the benefit
of the population on both sides of the ceasefire line. A comprehensive economic recovery programme will start this summer with €2m, and a second phase of €2m will follow next year focusing on infrastructure development. This could be renovation of hospitals and public services, water supplies or the electricity network in Gali, working with NGOs as well as developing income generation activities, stimulating local economic development. In South Ossetia the EC funds programmes where we cannot implement them ourselves. We work with the OSCE and implementing partners such as the UNDP and UNHCR. There is actually a call for proposals out now for a second programme, and we will start at the end of the year. We will extend the rehabilitation activities in the conflict zone to the other regions of Abkhazia, again including income generation activities and work with civil society. We also have small-scale projects under way to support local NGOs that are active in the areas of democracy and human rights.

Thus by working with people on programmes for the benefit of the local populations, the EC supports the peace process in an indirect way. If we can contribute to improving the living conditions of people affected by the conflict and at the same time create conditions for DPs to return, and if we work with civil society, and in due course maybe build bridges, we can, we hope, make a contribution to confidence building. That is intervention at a different level than directly with political negotiations but in our view it is still very important. All these programmes, including for Abkhazia, will be up and running between this summer and the end of the year, and by then the EC will be the largest donor for projects in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, with programme budgets totalling approximately €20m.

Archil Gegeshidze, Senior Fellow, Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, Tbilisi

I would like to start by expressing great satisfaction with yesterday’s and today’s discussions. Of course this is not the first undertaking of this kind devoted to the issues and problems we have discussed during these two days. Nevertheless, I think that this project marks a step forward towards the future construction of peace, stability and prosperity in our region.

Some would have argued a few decades ago that the South Caucasus was a remote area, distant from the civilized world, and that it should not be taken too seriously, that not too many resources, political, economic or others, should be devoted to solving its problems. Now this is certainly not the case. The South Caucasus is getting closer to the focal point of world politics. This is one of the regions where the contours of the future world order have been taking shape. We see being tested new tools and models for settling conflicts, building democratic institutions, developing market economies, breaking old stereotypes and instilling new values. This is a very interesting region, and that is why the South Caucasus finds itself under such international scrutiny. In this small plot there are so many problems that attract the interest and absorb the resources of leading world powers and international organisations.

Now I would like to select some of the topics which, in my view, we need to look at in more detail so that we can bring closer a solution of our regional problems. The first topic, mentioned in many of yesterday’s contributions and comments, is the causal link between conflicts and democracy. To what extent do the current conflicts hinder the development of democracy in the region? Or, vice versa, how might deeper
democratization in the region contribute to conflict resolution? Would more thorough democracy be a sufficient condition for solving outstanding problems here in the region, first and foremost for settling the conflicts? Different presenters have illuminated different aspects of the topic. For example, Oksana Antonenko mentioned the need to create a peace constituency. A peace constituency or legitimate interlocutors for negotiating peace are almost impossible to have without having more democracy in the region. Because as Mr Khutsishvili mentioned yesterday, the proponents of keeping the status quo are unfortunately stronger at present in the region than those who would like to change things and to move towards compromise and solutions.

It is also important that all stakeholders in the region should understand that we need to develop a common regional consciousness, and take responsibility for our shared environment. We cannot escape from this environment and the environment cannot escape from us. Eventually, we all have to live here, so we have to share whatever resources we have, not use them against each other, whether these be military, diplomatic or economic resources. New thinking and new visions should be based on an understanding of the necessity of resource sharing.

There is a third, related topic. Europeanization, as a distant goal but still an objective, in the form of institutional integration into Western-values-based institutions, could be a strong stimulus for all the stakeholders in the region to seek compromises and to build peace. As was mentioned yesterday, some stakeholders do still distrust the international institutions and organisations which are involved in the conflict resolution process. We should bear in mind, however, that the EU is planning to support more projects in the region which will benefit both sides in the conflict and which should promote Western values in the region. They should also create alternatives for those stakeholders who think that they only have one option. I am speaking about the Abkhazians, for example – I have heard arguments that the Russian choice is the only one for them because nobody else, neither Georgians nor the West, has anything to offer them. So Western values should be cultivated in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, so that the people there understand that in the end the Western system is a preferable destination for them from the point of view of pursuing whatever national goals they may have, including preserving their national identity. The Europeanization topic needs further exploration.

The final point is also one raised by Oksana Antonenko, about how to combine reconciliation and restoration of territorial integrity. Any viable future formula for resolving conflicts will have to be based on voluntary reconciliation between the parties. Solutions that are imposed, whether by military or diplomatic means, would be temporary or false solutions. Things will only work in the long term if all the parties concerned have more democracy. Only democratized societies can find the common language needed to remedy the situation.

I have not touched on issues such as increasing the effectiveness of the international organizations, Russia’s very important and decisive role and, no less importantly, how to get constructive cooperation between Russia and the West. Only by concerted efforts can they come up with a coordinated agenda and strategy aimed at solving the outstanding security problems in the region.
Roy Allison, Head, Russia and Eurasia Programme, Chatham House, London

I shall offer some personal observations on interesting themes in yesterday’s discussion, since this morning’s is still fresh in people’s minds. The first theme, and I will not say much about this, as Archil Gegeshidze has emphasized it, is the key question of the causal relationship between good governance and conflict resolution. That was the subject of our first panel, where some participants talked about the need to cultivate democratic processes for conflict resolution. It was also suggested that leaders who are not fully legitimately elected will fail to address the true issues in a spirit of effort at real resolution of the Karabakh or other conflicts, since this may be a threat to their own political positions, and their focus would be on consolidating their own power and that of the groups associated with them. It was suggested that the more interest groups that take part in discussion of conflict resolution the better. But at the same time it was pointed out that the new parties in Azerbaijan, for example, have very similar agendas, and that there is no real diversity at present. This points to the broader problem of rendering people at large aware of the possibilities and the compromises that are necessary on all sides. The latter is something that is not being done adequately, as has been pointed out by analysts for years, and it is something to keep in mind. Domitilla Sagamoso pointed out that tensions over conflicts, at least in Georgia, have in fact increased since the Rose Revolution, so the assumption of a causal link between democratic progress and conflict resolution is not something that we can take for granted.

Secondly, in regard to security, I was particularly interested in the comments made by David Darchiashvili, on what we might call the human dimension of security. He talked about the need to provide for the needs of society as well as the international environment, and referred to changes that have taken place since the Rose Revolution. This is something that is often overlooked, and it relates to the point I made about engaging the population so that they feel that they have a stake in the political solutions being offered. If their own conditions are felt to be inadequately catered for, it is difficult to see sustainable support being forthcoming for often challenging proposals made at higher levels.

The third area is the relationship between the North and the South Caucasus. I thought that Domitilla Sagamoso’s presentation was very helpful. There are serious worries about the direction of developments in the North Caucasus. It is not at all clear whether in fact this area has become increasingly difficult for Russia to control, or whether if that were the case it would encourage Russia to adopt a more serious approach to resolving the conflicts in the South. Alternatively it could lead to greater militarization of Russian policy in the North Caucasus, which would impact on its handling of relations with Abkhazia, South Ossetia and so on. These are very open questions, but I think more attention should be paid to what is happening in the North Caucasus region.

After these points we moved to looking more specifically at the conflicts and it was suggested that the ‘no peace, no war’ situation was no longer sustainable. Also that new opportunities had been created by the political changes in Georgia, but that at the same time there had been worrying developments with the escalation of tension around South Ossetia. The earlier presumption, in a sense, was in favour of the states, not the unrecognized entities, but this may not now be correct, if these entities are developing relationships with the outside world. This puts the pressure to try
to find remedies and not just rely on the passage of time. Of course that this is happening at a time when Russian policy is not static suggested that Russia was increasingly weaker, yet at the same time more defensive. It seems to me that this means more unpredictability in policy. I am also more concerned about the quality of policy making in Russia, because of the way the decision-making process is being narrowed down. This means that good ideas, that otherwise might be considered more seriously, are not feeding in and being assessed. There is no proper process of assessment and this is quite worrying, since Russia is an indispensable part of any sustainable solution.

We also looked at the nature of conflict resolution more generally. It was suggested by Mr Khutsishvili that there is a conflict preservation system, and the impact of unfreezing these conflicts was discussed. In one sense this kind of unfreezing could lead to a greater threat of destabilization, and that may have been the assumption in the Shevardnadze period, it was suggested. On the other hand one cannot generalize across all these conflicts. One has to look at the specific conditions. For those who are involved in conflict analysis, there are further issues to be discussed and looked at afresh because of the dynamic political situation following the Rose Revolution.

Later yesterday afternoon interesting points were made from an international legal point of view. The kind of insights that lawyers bring are often missed in discussions like this. Some of the discussion was controversial, perhaps, but I think it demonstrated how international solutions do require an understanding of this legal level of analysis. It was pointed out that frozen conflicts should not be confused with unregulated conflicts, that the whole issue of self determination has been expressed in political terms, and that the background of Soviet ethnoterritorialism and nationalities policy has to be taken into account. There is a pre-existing legal structure which still feeds into current assessments.

There was also a discussion about the implications of Kosovo and the outcomes of Kosovo, which I found interesting. This could affect the way the belligerent parties speak about conflicts in this area in the near future. The whole idea of dealing with standards before status has not been much analysed in the research literature, and perhaps it should be, in a non-judgemental way. The focus on final status has been a recipe for no movement at all. We can take this issue or leave it, but I think it may need to be given further consideration. The military relationship between Georgia and the US could make the resolution of the conflict, in some sense, more difficult rather than less. That goes against the political logic here, but I think, since the United States' policy is very dynamic as well and Georgia is a very small part of that policy, we should take that into account.

Comment 1 Elin Suleymanov: I would like to support several of the points made in Mr Gegeshidze's presentation. In fact, I think that our common responsibility for the region and our common identity is a fundamental issue. The independence of each of our states gives us certain rights and imposes certain responsibilities. Which means that as we act, as we go about our business in the region, we cannot focus only on ourselves, but should think about the region as a community, somewhere we all live. As I said earlier, Georgia and Azerbaijan have been quite successful at that and I hope that soon our Armenian neighbours will join this cooperative framework. It would require certain policy shifts, which I will not go into now, but it would open up the door for cooperation. I also fully agree that there is a great need for democratic development in the region. There is no question that Georgia today is the leader in the movement towards democracy, and we all need greater democracy and greater
participation. But I think even my Georgian friends would agree that Georgia too has a long way to go, we all do. For that, as Mr Razuks said, the best way is through integration with more advanced institutions. In this case, very simply, looking at the map, it does not take a genius to see that they must be European and Euro-Atlantic institutions. That would include NATO, the EU and the Council of Europe, of which two of our nations are members.

It is in the interest of the Russian Federation to have more democratic, advanced and reformed neighbours. I do not believe that that could pose a threat to Russia. Having said that I would like to emphasize something mentioned in passing by Roy Allison, and at greater length yesterday by Domitilla Sagramoso, namely that Russia is an important neighbour not only because of its size, but also because it embraces a large part of the North Caucasus, which is in turmoil. However much we may wish to turn our backs on that region and focus on our own conflicts, there is an ongoing problem there. Let me give you an example. Azerbaijan is a Muslim nation, and most of our population is Muslim by belief, whether nominally or not. We’ve seen some of the effects trickling down from the North Caucasus of more radical movements and the appearance of what were usually, but ignorantly, called Wahhabists, basically radical Sunni groups. We can do what we can to fight the symptoms, but we know that the underlying cause is the continuing uncontrolled violence, the kind which impels people either to Muslim, Christian or Buddhist versions of radicalism. Until the violence ends we will continue to have this problem.

Two more practical points. I was pleased to hear the proposal for a needs assessment for the occupied areas. We like to talk about conflicts in symbolic terms. But at the end of the day, as I know well from my work on the ground with refugee settlements, it comes down to very simple things, such as what do you do about stolen pipes. Who will replace them? What do you do about ruined houses? Is there a power generator? All these things cost money. This is important, and it would be a practical sign for people that there is actually some hope. One of the problems that has been so destructive of optimism is that we have never had any practical suggestions about what was going to happen after the conflicts if there was some resolution to them.

I would like to sound a cautionary note on the calls for wider participation of stakeholders, interest groups and so on. Democracy is a great idea, but at the right point. We have to understand that today, for example in Azerbaijan, most of the political parties are more radically inclined than the current government. If you propose opening up the process, there will be an emotional upsurge. I would not support the view that we should not unfreeze conflicts. That would be to go a bit too far. But we should be very cautious about opening things up, because of the problems of restraining the emotions which would be released.

Comment 2 (Stepan Safaryan):

We have to understand that our region is in the middle of an important phase of transformation, as are a number of important international organisations and institutions. The world is changing fast, and there are new threats to be faced. I support partially the proposal for needs assessments referred to by Mr Suleymanov. We must take on this idea more broadly, and understand the needs of all groups and players, whether they are recognized or not. All the subjects in our region have to be taken into account, even if we do not always want to see them as players. In fact, during these last two days we have talked a lot about them, and indeed recognized them as players in our region. Whether we like it or not, we are involved in a broad process of transformation where democratization has become a necessity in every
corner of our region. We have only one option. It is not a question of choosing between NATO and something else, or between the EU and something else. We have to choose the system of values on which we would like to build our region. Will we be with the democratic world or not? I personally do not think that there is a real choice for us between Russia and the West. Our choice is about the values which we would like to adopt. Democracy is about discussion, peace and a way forward for development.

Comment 3: I support the idea that our region is in need of more democracy. I would like to recommend to the international community, to the EU perhaps, to create conditions where the sides could compete not in an arms race, but in democratization. It would be good for the population, which would enjoy decent living conditions and have their rights protected at a high level. It would also bring more stability to the region, since it is well known that democratic countries do not fight against each other, which would of course be a positive outcome for the international community.

Comment 4 (Giorgi Khutsishvili): I note that the idea of unfreezing the conflicts turned out to be very popular and was touched upon by many speakers, and I would like to add a few words to what I said yesterday.

The conflict preservation system works, in my opinion, to prevent the structural transformation of conflicts. Some have mentioned that the structural components of conflicts are indeed changing. For instance, the actors have changed. In the secessionist regimes, we can see a concentrating of power going on, and more dependence on outside actors. Of course there is some change. But the system works specifically towards preventing a structural transformation of conflicts into something else in a way which might make them more manageable. So the task is how to make the system more manageable, without destructive interference. For this purpose, I think that the conflict preservation system should be opposed by a conflict regulation system that would reflect a very clear policy of cooperation between governments, international organisations and civil society. These components are all necessary in order to bring about change. I would say that it is something like the opposite of creating an enemy image. The process of creating of an enemy image has been described as the projection of shadows. In order to resolve conflicts, we need to shed light on the conflict preservation systems and then to counter them using conflict regulation systems.

Chair: Thank you very much. The conference is now at an end. We have had two interesting days of discussion and there is much food for thought. It has been very successful in terms of the overall aim of the project, which is to create a dialogue between civil society, researchers and members of government in order to look for solutions and new ways forward. I hope that the process will continue.