



**COUNCIL OF
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**Address
By Javier SOLANA,
EU High Representative for the CFSP
to the Committee on Foreign Affairs
of the European Parliament**

Javier SOLANA briefed the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament today on recent developments concerning the most important issues on the international agenda and took part in the ensuing debate with MEPs. The following is an edited summary of Mr SOLANA's introductory statement and of his replies to questions from MEPs:

Introductory statement

"It is good to be back in the European Parliament. I am looking forward to exchanging views with you on a number of issues and events.

*But before we start, allow me to point out that one important Member is missing from the room, Bronislaw **Geremek**. He was a good friend, a great European and an active member of this Committee. I miss him.*

I want to start directly with the dramatic events in Georgia. I know you have been briefed by the Presidency both in this Committee and in Plenary after the special General Affairs and External Relations Council meeting and the European Council on 1 September. The very timely European Council mandated President Sarkozy to continue the discussions with Russia and Georgia with a view to the full implementation of the Six-Point Plan.

Since then, much has happened. We have had an informal meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers in Avignon on Friday and Saturday, a visit to Moscow and Tbilisi with President Sarkozy and President Barroso on Monday and an EU-Ukraine Summit yesterday in Paris. I would very much like to report on them to today.

*I am just back from these meetings and I think it would be useful to spend some time this morning explaining to you where we stand on these issues: **Georgia, Russia and Ukraine**.*

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On Georgia, I can report good progress. After four hours of tough negotiations in Moscow on Monday, we obtained four clear commitments from President Medvedev.

First, by 10 October, there will be no Russian soldiers on Georgian territory outside Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In their place, international observers - including 200 from the EU - will be deployed by 1 October and Russian troops will leave within ten from that date.

Secondly, even before that, by 15 September, the Russians will remove their check points on the axis from Poti to Senaki, freeing Georgia's main transport route.

Thirdly, while Russian troops will stay inside Abkhazia and South Ossetia, we obtained two key commitments from President Medvedev. They are the following: the OSCE observers will be able to go back inside South Ossetia and the UN observers will stay inside Abkhazia. The Russian forces — and this is very important — will withdraw to their positions held prior to the conflict, and that is the agreement we had at the European Council and this has been achieved - and not just behind the administrative borders of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Fourthly, the launch of international discussions on 15 October in Geneva, to talk about security and stability in the region. This for us includes access for international observers and the return of refugees and displaced persons, both from this conflict and from the 1990s. Launching these international discussions is essential in order to continue to hold Russia accountable for the steps it has taken and the commitments it has now made.

Let me highlight that we obtained Russia's and Georgia's agreement to the deployment of a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) mission on the ground. As a result, from 1 October, 200 EU observers will monitor the implementation of the six-point plan, in particular the most important point, namely the withdrawal of Russian troops from the areas bordering South Ossetia and Abkhazia. We will also monitor the political, rule-of-law and human rights situation.

Let me say that the meeting in Moscow was long, more than four hours of tough discussions but I think constructive in the end. We also went to Tbilisi and spent some hours with President Saakashvili. He was pleased to see what had been achieved. We said again, to him personally, what the European Council had agreed on the 1 September. He was very pleased to hear that and it was a good meeting. I will be in touch with him as we will have to have some communication in order to deploy the mission and do the preparatory work.

We will start our deployment to the areas bordering South Ossetia and Abkhazia, but our clear ambition is to be able to deploy our monitors throughout the territory of Georgia. This is why we want to make quick progress, and have set ourselves very short deadlines. Needless to say, all the crisis management bodies in the Council are working full speed to reach our objective of deploying the mission by 1 October.

In one month, a decisive response by the European Union has managed to stop a dangerous conflict and obtain the withdrawal of both sides to the positions they held before the conflict broke out. A clear international framework is in place to ensure the non-use of force, the definitive end to hostilities and resumption of dialogue and diplomacy as the way to solve the crisis.

I would like to pay tribute to President Sarkozy whose strong reaction and leadership have shown what the EU can do when it is united in determination and in action. The extraordinary European Council on 1 September sent a strong and clear message and we can already see the results. Not

everything has been done but a very important part of what has to be done has been agreed and done.

The way the European Union — all its institutions, including the European Parliament— has handled this crisis should be an encouragement to all of us — to all of you — who want to see the European Union as a force for good, for peace, for action, in our neighbourhood and in the world. Normally when we meet in this format we highlight our shortcomings; this time I challenge you to say that we have to recognise that an important decision has been taken and even more importantly, actions have also been taken. As I said, much hard work remains ahead of us, with Russia, with Georgia and with our international partners. But we will do it and I think all the institutions of the EU will do it.

*Let me repeat once again, we strongly disagree with **Russia** over the status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. We have strongly condemned Russia's recognition, which has now led to the establishment of diplomatic relations between Moscow and Sukhumi and Tskhinvali.*

All these concerns will be raised in the international discussions in Geneva next month. I already mentioned that the issues of observer access and the return of refugees would also be discussed.

In this context, I would of course like to thank you, the Parliament, for your crucial support, as expressed in your resolution of 3 September on Georgia.

*Let me say that yesterday, as you can imagine, this was also an important topic to discuss with President Yuschchenko of **Ukraine** at the Summit. It was a very good meeting and I think President Yuschchenko was very pleased. The meeting was very long, very direct and very frank. We listened to the President, his analysis of the situation and his point of view. He listened to our report of the trip and how we perceive the situation. And I really got the impression, knowing President Yuschchenko as I have done for many years, that he really felt it was a very important moment for him and his country. I think that the support lent by the EU yesterday by agreeing to negotiate the Association Agreement, and by recognising and supporting the territorial integrity of Ukraine, was greatly appreciated by him and, as I said, it was a very important meeting. The agreement to negotiate the Association Agreement and the clear statement that Ukraine is a European country, sent a clear signal to him and his country of our intention to build stronger and closer ties. This closes no doors for the development of our relations — it even opens new avenues for the future. We also agreed to launch a visa dialogue with the perspective, in time, of a visa-free regime.*

Let me also mention that this work in the month of August has also led us to emphasise the need to give more support to our eastern neighbourhood policy. I think the idea of the Eastern Partnership has grown already and we will continue in that direction.

*Let me also say two or three things on that. First on **Moldova**. As you know, Moldova is another important element for our eastern policy. We are very much engaged in having a 5+2 mechanism in place, at the right point in time, to find a solution to the conflict. Let me say that on Monday, an important meeting was held in Vienna of the 3+2, that means the 5 that are in the context of the negotiations minus the two parties. And there it was agreed that we would see how, in the near future, a meeting in the 5+2 format, that means with the presence of the two parties, can take place. That is the format in which a solution can be found.*

*Let me also say that as far as **Belarus** is concerned, I had the opportunity of talking to the minister for foreign affairs on the Sunday after the release of all political prisoners in Belarus had taken place and we hope also for improvements in the conduct of the parliamentary elections next week. If so, we will respond in kind.*

Going a little bit further, you remember that **Armenia** is also one of the conflict places in the region. I think that the events in Georgia also made the Armenians think about their situation and the meeting that took place between President Gül of Turkey and the President of Armenia is another important step in the direction of trying to find solutions to the problems that have been unresolved for too long.

A word about **Russia**. I think that the meetings in recent days have shown that whenever we have an approach in which the EU is united and in which we engage in a hard-headed manner it produces results. But it is true, as the European Council said, that we have to review our relationship with Russia and I hope very much that between now and when the Summit is due to take place in November in Paris we will be able to analyse our relationship. The European Council made that very clear and we will have to keep on working in that direction.

Before I finish, two words on the **Balkans**. The summer has also been busy on that front. As you know, we had a good debate, a good discussion, with the UN, with the Secretary General and his team, in order to get the technical arrangements in place for the deployment of our ESDP mission in **Kosovo** (EULEX), the transfer from UNMIK to EULEX. It is working and I can now say that EULEX deployment is on track after that agreement.

Regarding **Serbia**, you know President Tadic was in Brussels last week. You know we talked to him very frankly and congratulated him on the results the government has achieved and we hope very much that the interim agreement can be implemented soon. I hope that by the next General Affairs Council we can take such a decision. The process of ratifying the Stabilisation and Association Agreement in Serbia was completed this Monday and I hope very much that we will be able to keep up the momentum.

Let me move on as time is short. I would like to tell you that I will be going to the **Middle East** tomorrow. We had an important discussion on the Middle East at the Gymnich meeting, in Avignon, last Friday and Saturday. I think it is important that we take advantage of what are probably the last days left in the calendar if we want to achieve something from the agreements reached in Annapolis. I will be going to New York soon for over a week, where we will have an important series of meetings on the Middle East. We will have a meeting of the Quartet, and the Quartet plus the Arabs, and other meetings in other formats, with both sides present. I think it is very important that we Europeans try to analyse the situation after the General Assembly in New York and see how to go from then until the end of the year and until the new American Administration is fully operational. It is important to try and ensure that what has been achieved in the way of negotiations up until then is not lost and that we can continue to move on from the beginning of 2009. It will be an important responsibility for us to keep up the momentum.

I will be talking with President Abbas. In Israel, as you know, there is a great deal of political activity as the Kadima primaries are taking place in a few days and a new political situation will probably emerge. We have to take all of that into consideration. I think that the European Union must commit itself to the comprehensive nature of the process. The Syrian track still has the potential to move, or continue to move, and we have to maintain the dynamic.

Another positive development is the new relationship between Syria and Lebanon, the visit by President Suleiman, the elected president of Lebanon, to Syria and the recognition of the bilateral relationship, the exchange of ambassadors. These are promising signs. So, there are important things to tackle from now until the end of the year and I hope that we will have the opportunity to talk to everyone in due course so that we have the full engagement of the parties.

*Let me say a few more words, on Sudan and Chad and on Afghanistan and Pakistan. On **Sudan and Chad**, at the end of July, I sent the mid-term review to the UN Secretary-General stressing two very important points: firstly the need for a follow-on force from EUFOR at the end of the mandate and secondly that the UN Security Council needs to take a decision very rapidly so that the whole operation can finish by the fixed time, that is 15 March 2009. After talking to members of the Security Council I hope that in the UN General Assembly ministerial week it will be possible to get that UNSC Resolution on Chad.*

*On **Afghanistan**, the summer has not been a good one. There have been setbacks, including the tragic loss of life of many Europeans and other soldiers serving in ISAF. Drug production has remained high. We have appointed a new EU Special Representative who has started in Kabul after Mr Vendrell's mandate ended. We have to maintain the line started at the Paris conference but, as you know, we have to pay very close attention to Afghanistan. If you put that together with the situation in **Pakistan**, you can be sure that those issues will be very high on our agenda in the coming period of time. This is going to be something we have to tackle and we have to talk about in this committee, probably in the near future.*

Let me stop there and respond to your questions. I think it is fair to say that this period of time is an important one for the EU. In the coming weeks and months we must pay close attention to all these problems and I hope we will do it together. I look forward to our relationship at this important time. And now, as I said, I am happy to answer any questions, thank you very much.

Summary of answers by Mr SOLANA to questions from the floor

GEORGIA

Asked by MEPs about the EU mission to be deployed in Georgia, Mr SOLANA explained that it would be a 200-strong civilian observation mission, with the intention of deploying throughout the whole of Georgia. The aim was to start deploying on 1 October and to operate in close cooperation with the existing UN and OSCE missions on the ground.

Asked about the appointment of a new EU Special Representative for Georgia, Mr SOLANA said that Peter SEMNEBY, the EUSR for the South Caucasus, was doing a very good job, and working 24 hours a day, on the ground, in Georgia. A decision on a new EUSR for Georgia was expected at the next General Affairs and External Relations Council meeting, on 15 September.

RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA

Questioned by MEPs about what the EU could do if the agreement with Russia (of 8 September) was not respected, Mr SOLANA pointed to the conclusions of the European Council of 1 September and said that the meetings on the negotiation of the Partnership Agreement with Russia were suspended until Russian troops withdrew to the positions they held prior to 7 August. Mr SOLANA added that it was in the EU's interests to have such an agreement, but not at any price, and that it was also in Russia's interest.

UKRAINE

To questions about strengthening the EU's relations with Ukraine, Mr SOLANA replied that one of the most important elements was Ukraine's internal political stability, underlining that that was a domestic issue in which the EU could not interfere. At the EU-Ukraine summit of 9 September, the decision to start to negotiating an Association Agreement with Ukraine was an important step for that country.

MOLDOVA

Concerning the Moldova and Transnistria issue, Mr SOLANA said that the EU was calling for the resumption of the settlement talks in the established "5+2" format, in view of the results of the "3+2" consultative meeting held in Vienna on 8 September between the international mediators (Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE) and observers (the European Union and United States).

REGIONAL APPROACH to the CAUCASUS

In October, an international conference on the stability of the region would be convened, with the presence of EU Member States. Mr SOLANA stressed the need to engage Turkey on the issue and to widen the talks to other regional players. He said that the EU had supported the idea of a regional platform, launched by Prime Minister ERDOGAN, from the outset and would participate constructively. This Turkish initiative could, Mr SOLANA said, also be useful in creating a positive atmosphere in the efforts to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. He added that the question of the security of the Black Sea needed to be considered.

AFGHANISTAN

In response to questions concerning the strategy for Afghanistan, Mr SOLANA said it did not need to be changed abruptly. However, he added that the EU needed to follow the situation closely, especially in the run-up to the 2009 presidential and parliamentary elections in Afghanistan. A new EUSR for Afghanistan, Mr. SEQUI, was appointed the 24 July.

MIDDLE EAST

Mr Solana told MEPs that he could not say when a decision would be taken on an EU Association Agreement with Syria but there might be one after the UN General Assembly week. He was pleased with Turkey's mediation role between Syria and Israel.

KOSOVO

Mr. SOLANA reiterated that Kosovo was a very different issue from South Ossetia and Abkhazia. In Kosovo, there was an UN administration for several years and there had been several rounds of negotiations, including the six-month troika process. During these talks, there were in-depth discussions and they were held in the spirit of compromise, with no military action.
