

PROTOCOL

of the Sixth Session of the Coordinating Council
of the Georgian and Abkhaz Sides

Geneva, 17-18 December 1998

The Sixth Session of the Coordinating Council established on the basis of the Concluding Statement on the Results of the Geneva Meeting of the Georgian and Abkhaz Sides, held from 17 to 19 November 1997, took place as an exception in Geneva 17-18 December, under the aegis of the United Nations and under the chairmanship of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Mr. Liviu Bota, and with the participation of representatives of the Russian Federation in its capacity as facilitator, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the States in the group of Friends of the Secretary-General of the United Nations - France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America - as observers.

The Georgian side was represented by the delegation led by Mr. Vazha Lordkipanidze.

The Abkhaz side was represented by the delegation led by Mr. Sergei Bagapsh.

Opening the Session, the Special Representative noted that following and facilitated by the Athens Meeting of the Georgian and Abkhaz Sides on Confidence-Building Measures, held from 16 to 18 October 1998, the sides actively engaged in productive bilateral talks on issues related to: 1) security and the non-use of force, 2) the return of refugees, and 3) measures for the economic rehabilitation of Abkhazia. While not suggesting that either side failed to negotiate in bona fide, the Special Representative noted that it seems that some misunderstandings arose and the talks stalled. Nevertheless, in the opinion of the Special Representative, the positions of the parties on the specific issues dividing them are not irreconcilable, and there is room for the talks to continue.

The Special Representative continued that this Council session takes place against the backdrop of a rapidly deteriorating security situation on the ground in the zone of conflict. The situation is extremely dangerous and there is a real risk that the May events might be repeated.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations invited the delegations of the sides and the participants of the Session, in approaching the discussion of the items on the agenda, to take into account the above-mentioned circumstances and to consider the gravity of the situation and the importance of the present moment.

The adopted agenda included the following items:

1. Issues related to the lasting non-resumption of hostilities and to security problems.

2. Refugees and internally displaced persons.
3. Economic and social problems.

The representatives of the sides, the Russian Federation in its capacity as facilitator, the OSCE and the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General of the United Nations made statements.

The Chief Military Observer of UNOMIG General Tariq Ghazi, the representative of UNHCR Mr. Soren Jessen-Petersen, and the representative of UNDP Mr. Marco Borsotti also took part in the discussion of the agenda.

The Abkhaz side stated that it is unilaterally starting the process of return of refugees to the Gali district and called on the United Nations, the Russian Federation in its capacity as facilitator, the OSCE, the states belonging to the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General as well as the Georgian side to contribute to this process.

The Georgian side noted that the statement by the Abkhaz side on the so called unilateral return of refugees³ is of a purely declarative nature and in reality does not give an opportunity to implement genuinely the process of return of refugees and displaced persons, since it is well known that the organisation of this process is impossible without creating appropriate required mechanisms and guarantees in which the Georgian side and the international community should take a most active part.

The sides made statements in connection with the emerging danger of destabilization of the situation in the zone of conflict (attached).

The Council adopted the following decisions:

1. The sides shall immediately take decisive measures such that their corresponding bodies of executive power will fully implement the decisions taken earlier by the Coordinating Council aimed at easing tensions and the normalization of the situation in the Gali district, particularly those provided for by the Protocol of the Fourth (Second Extraordinary) Session (paras. 1), the Protocol of the Fifth Session (paras. 1a, 1b, 1c) and the Annex thereto.
2. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations shall continue and complete consultations with the Sides on the establishment of the Joint Group on Investigation and Prevention of Terrorist Acts and Other Offences, in accordance with the Council's decisions contained in the Protocol of the Fourth (Second Extraordinary) Session (para. 2) and the Protocol of the Fifth Session (para. 2).
3. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General⁴ of the United Nations, should the sides ignore protests concerning violations of the Moscow Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces, shall inform the Secretary-General of the United Nations, as provided for by the Protocol of the Fifth Session of the Council regarding responses to the protests of the representatives of UNOMIG and the CIS peacekeeping force, so that the Secretary-General may put this question for consideration by the Security Council.
4. To convene expeditiously, not later than 22 December, in the Gali district, a meeting of authorized representatives of the sides in order to

prevent destabilization of the situation in the zone of conflict, to agree on and take effective measures for the implementation of earlier bilateral agreements contained in the Protocol on the Ceasefire and Separation of Armed Units and Guarantees for the Prevention of Acts involving Force of 25 May 1998 and in the Protocol of the Meeting of the Georgian and Abkhaz Sides on the Stabilization of the Situation along the Line of Separation of Sides, signed in Sukhumi 24 September 1998.

The participants of the session took note of the invitations of the Governments of both Turkey and Ukraine to host High-level Meetings in their respective countries, within the framework of the Geneva peace process.

[999 words]