

## REMARKS

On the Occasion of the 59<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly

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### *INTRODUCTION*

- **Mr. President, Mr. Secretary General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen...**
- **...It is my pleasure and honor to represent Georgia today at the 59<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.**
- **Let me begin by expressing my deep appreciation to Mr. Julian Hunte for the leadership and vision with which he conducted the last Session, and by congratulating Mr. Jean Ping on the assumption of the Presidency of this Session.**
- **I would also like to take this opportunity to salute the tremendous leadership of the Secretary General, who has worked so hard to make the UN a more responsive and effective body.**
- **The Government of Georgia reaffirms its deep support for the important work carried out around the world by this great institution, and to all who serve it.**
- **The beginning of the New Millennium marks a time of great opportunity for the global community of nations that make up the UN...**
- **...A community whose collective responsibility is to help strengthen those institutions that promote and protect the principles enshrined in the UN Charter...**
- **...So they can more effectively tackle the challenges and issues facing our world today.**
- **And so that together, we might enhance our shared ability to promote peace, alleviate suffering, expand liberty, and advance human development with renewed wisdom and courage.**

- **The belief that we must be able adapt to great change, while remaining faithful to a set of core ideals and values, is one that has special resonance in Georgia today.**
- **For few countries have witnessed so much transformation in the last year – and fewer still have done so with a more clear sense of purpose.**
- **In some respects, Georgia's revolution has made our small nation – willingly or unwillingly, a test case for the modern challenges of democratic transition...**
- **...And perhaps, for a revised formula of international relations in our increasingly inter-connected and complex world.**

### ***PASSING THE FIRST TEST — GEORGIA'S DEMOCRATIC REVIV***

- **Nearly a year has passed since our dramatic Rose Revolution graced the covers of newspapers and television broadcasts around the world...**
- **...A Revolution that had at its core one simple demand – the creation of a stable, equitable, and functional democracy.**
- **It gives me great pride Mr. President, to inform you that we have accomplished that demand, in ways that few abroad or at home ever imagined possible.**
- **And I am enormously proud of the Georgian people – whose courage, unity, and steadfast belief in a better future made our Revolution possible.**
- **It is because of the Georgian people that our experiment in democracy is a success – and because of their sacrifice and determination that we have achieved such impressive results today.**
- **In less than one year, we have proven the depth and breadth of our commitment to democracy by successfully holding three sets of elections (Presidential; Parliamentary; and Regional) – judged throughout the international community as free and fair expressions of the public's will.**
- **And we have proven that we can take care of our people...like the teachers of our country who for more than a decade were abandoned by the State.**
- **I am reminded of one woman in particular, in Western Georgia, who just last week received 12 years of back-pay from our government!**

- **Until now, that brave woman's pay was spent on the estates of corrupt officials and government Ministers...**
- **The dedication of this brave woman – who sacrificed for so many years so that the younger generation could simply receive an education – a chance at a better life - is an inspiration for all Georgians.**
- **Never again will these loyal public servants have to harvest food from their gardens to make ends meet.**
- **Never again will they have to face a government that disrespects their dignity.**
- **Protecting people like her are the reason we have confronted corruption in Georgia so vigorously – corruption that threatened the very fabric of our society.**
- **By first going after corrupt government officials who enjoyed a near "untouchable" status – and then seeking to address the institutional elements of corruption...**
- **...We have been able to re-instate the rule of law and create lasting change in the system.**
- **That is why we conducted a radical downsizing of our military, security, customs, and police forces by up to 50%...**
- **...And introduced the first-ever civilian leadership in defense, security and law enforcement bodies.**
- **...We have made these painful choices because we know that unless we change the system itself, it is we who are responsible for the corrupt behavior of state officials...**
- **...And it is we who are responsible for the corrupt behavior of local businesses...**
- **...And it is we who are responsible for failing to build a better future for our citizens.**
- **Our success in this battle means that all citizens of Georgia finally have a chance to live in a normal State – where merit rather than money makes the difference.**

- **And where rules and laws firmly and clearly govern the actions of men.**
- **To make these changes permanent and sustainable, we have raised salaries by 6, 8 and even 10 times for public servants so that incentives are aligned...so that a fair system can flourish...and so that people can serve the State with dignity and honor.**
- **That is why we created a new tax system that clarifies and simplifies both the payment AND administration of taxes – creating the lowest rates in the entire region while eliminating institutional sources of cheating and corruption.**
- **To hesitate or move cautiously at this critical stage would mean turning our backs on the promises we have made – and returning to business as usual in this part of the world...**
- **I believe you cannot hesitate at such moments, if you truly want to build a better future, and forever change the rules of the game.**
- **...But Georgia today is a visibly different State than one year ago, with less games...and new rules...**
- **That is why those who fled Georgia throughout the 1990's are now returning by the thousands...**
- **...Putting their skills, talents, ideas and energy to work for the new Georgia.**
- **And there is a great deal of new energy...**
- **There is a renewed sense of hope and a renewed sense of purpose that speaks of unity – and the unique strength that comes with it.**
- **Georgia's experiment in democracy is an on-going success...not simply because I declare it or wish, but rather...because the people of Georgia continue to embrace it.**
- **We are a nation that celebrates and cherishes religious tolerance and religious freedom...**
- **...We are a nation that believes in the sanctity of rule of law and a strong judicial system.**

- **And one thing is clear...democracy can and democracy is thriving in our part of the world...**
- **...Because the principles embraced by democratic governance are themselves reflections of Georgia's national identity, and universal desire to be free.**

***BUILDING RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE...***

- **Part of creating a successful State depends on the ability of its institutions to act maturely and responsibly in the face of shared or joint challenges.**
- **And in this New Millennium, it is clear for all responsible nations that one issue above others unites us in common cause – as we seek to promote lasting peace, security and prosperity.**
- **This is the common war on terrorism.**
- **As a member of the global coalition that seeks to eliminate the threat of terrorism, Georgia has and Georgia will continue to make contributions wherever possible...and wherever necessary.**
- **Our willingness to act responsibly and contribute is on display today in Kosovo – in Afghanistan – and in Iraq...**
- **...All places where we have sent our forces to serve alongside others, in the pursuit of peace and freedom.**
- **For terrorism knows no greater enemy, and no greater force, than the one embodied in a free society.**
- **Today Mr. President, I am proud to announce Georgia's newest contribution to freedom - our offer to send fresh troops to Iraq to serve in the special protection force for the UN Mission in Iraq...**
- **...In offering our services to the UN Mission – we are hopeful that our presence will foster lasting stability, prosperity and freedom for the Iraqi people – a freedom worthy of all those who live in the region at large.**
- **In the context of our cooperation with international anti-terrorist efforts, we especially value the work of the Antiterrorist Committee of the Security Council...**

- **...And support the idea of strengthening the Terrorism Prevention Branch of the Secretariat.**
- **At this point however, one could reasonably pose the question – why such a small nation like Georgia – with less than 5 million inhabitants - is so out-front in its international commitments to fighting terrorism and contributing to this global cause...**
- **...The answer my friends to that question, is as painful as it is simple.**
- **Simply put – Georgia's commitments to fighting terror reflect our deep understanding of the destruction that it can and HAS wrought in our own country – and in our immediate neighborhood.**
- **Because Georgia understands – we must do all we can to defeat terror.**

### **CONFRONTING SEPARATIST CONFLICTS...**

- **Unfortunately, Georgia today is still dealing with the results of unresolved separatist conflicts in two parts of our country - in Abkhazia and South Ossetia...**
- **...That resulted in the loss of life, the destruction of property, the forced exodus and ethnic cleansing of 300,000 Georgians, thus creating a large population of internally displaced persons.**
- **These conflicts cannot remain unresolved – and they cannot ever be forgotten.**
- **Georgia's new democracy is committed to resolving these conflicts, because no democracy can allow black holes to exist on its territory.**
- **Why? Because their existence is fundamentally incompatible with progress, development and lasting stability no democracy can tolerate them on their territory.**
- **Today, we are living in era where the civilized nations of the world are united in a global war on terrorism, and in that world, neither Georgia nor the rest of the international community, can afford to look the other way.**
- **Because uncontrolled zones breed crime, drug trafficking, arms trading and most notable, terrorism.**

- **The threats that emerge from violent separatism affect the security not just of Georgia – but the security of the entire Caucasus.**
- **And in places like Abkhazia which sit on the shore of the Black Sea – these lawless zones have the potential to affect European security as long as they remain unresolved.**
- **The lawless territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are not only safe havens for mini-dictatorships...tightly controlled by elite groups that seek to profit from the criminal status quo.**
- **In these extremely closed societies – by in large cut off from the rest of the world - it causes me great pain that children there grow up with guns instead of books in their hands...**
- **...And that their heads are filled with hatred and intolerance, instead of respect for difference and appreciation for cultural diversity.**
- **We must put an end to this cycle of destruction...**
- **We must do more to eliminate the threats to peace and security that have for too long retarded our development.**
- **In seeking to find lasting solutions to these frozen conflicts, once again Georgia can be considered a "test case"...**
- **...Our success there would be your success too.**
- **...And here, I want to state in the clearest of terms: Georgia is fully committed to solving these conflicts through solely peaceful means.**
- **Georgia will not – and Georgia cannot use violence to solve these conflicts because no democracy can go to war against its own people.**
- **What all parts of Georgia need today is development, investment, security and lasting economic growth.**
- **We will peacefully re-incorporate South Ossetia and Abkhazia so that all citizens of Georgia can share in the fruits of our success.**
- **I believe the most effective mechanism for establishing Georgia's long-term continuity and wholeness is the creation of a strong economy...**

- **...Where those who are not yet sure if they want to remain outside Georgia will be given real incentives and chances to benefit from a prosperous, tolerant and successful Georgian state.**
- **A place where they and their children will be able to find jobs, earn stable incomes, and access new opportunities and investments...**
- **...By strengthening Georgia's economy, all inhabitants will know that they live in a State that is able to care and look after them – in sickness and in health.**
- **These are the qualities that an economically strong and democratically vibrant Georgia will guarantee all its citizens.**
- **We must do everything possible to build that vision – if we want to build a united future.**
- **As Georgia looks to the future – it does so with a clear and understandable plan...**
- **...Because the cause of peace must be waged thoughtfully and transparently - so each step is understood and can lead to more progress.**
- **Today, I would like to introduce the idea of a new "stage by stage settlement plan", designed to speed resolution of these conflicts.**
- **...One that consists of specific confidence building measures, that follow a plan, and that call for enhanced cooperation from the international community.**
- **Step One is to initiate confidence building measures – so that new forms of trust are established that create lasting human bonds between peoples.**
- **These measures can include exchanges that link NGO's to NGO's...students to students...journalists to journalists...health care workers to health care workers...athletes to athletes...and mothers to mothers...**
- **...So that more citizens and more segments of society learn to understand one another...and to trust one another.**
- **Building confidence means pursuing joint economic projects that create wealth where today there is want...and create profits where now there is poverty.**



- **Building confidence means restoring and guaranteeing the right of internally displaced peoples to return to their native homes – so that never again will Georgians find themselves homeless in their own country.**
- **We can and we must build confidence between peoples, as the first pre-condition to peace...**
- **We can and we must do more to protect human rights by activating the international police force in places like Gali – through the auspices of an OSCE Human Rights office.**
- **Together, we can and we must have the courage to reach out – and the necessary faith to believe...**
- **Step Two focuses on specific measures to be enacted...elements of which can be conducted in parallel with some of the confidence building measures.**
- **These begin with removing the instruments of war through demilitarization...**
- **...And eliminating the climate of fear through decriminalization.**
- **So that the people's of these regions can live without fear of uncontrolled military forces, militias or violent gangs, that hold all of us hostage to the status quo.**
- **We must improve the local security of all who live in the zones of unresolved conflict.**
- **These steps will require monitoring, verification and transparency, so that our collective march towards peace can be visible for all.**
- **And this means the international community must do more to provide the necessary resources, leadership and hope.**
- **...Which in the case of South Ossetia means immediately increasing and expanding the OSCE mandate along the Roki tunnel border...**
- **...While in Abkhazia, it means exploring the possibility of stationing UN monitors on the Abkhazian portion of the Russian-Georgian border.**

- **Because the advancement of peace and elimination of instability is incompatible with permeable and uncontrolled borders.**
- **Step Three envisions a global solution with global guarantees that lead to the establishment of the fullest and broadest form of autonomy...**
- **...One that protects culture and language, guarantee self governance, fiscal control and meaningful representation in national government...**
- **...And most importantly, an autonomy that empowers average people, so that isolated elites no longer act as the sole decision makers over people's future.**
- **Georgia greatly appreciates the support to date rendered by the Group of Friends and the Geneva process...and the concepts and principles contained within the Boden document which should be transmitted to the Abkhaz side.**
- **Now is the time to enhance those commitments and for the international community to do more.**
- **Because, simply put - the international community can no longer afford to look the other way at the gross violations of human rights that take place in separatist enclaves...**
- **...Just as they can no longer afford to ignore the security risks that emanate from these Black Holes and smugglers' safe havens.**
- **...The relevance of this point was brought home to all of us in the most tragic manner only recently, when barbarian terrorists seized a school of innocents in Beslan, shocking the world with their brutality.**
- **The people of Georgia condemn this brutal act and express their deep sympathy to the victims of this awful tragedy.**
- **And as we know, the terrorists that seized that school are common enemies of Russia and Georgia alike...**
- **...Notorious for their destruction, violence and killing – we have seen these individuals before...when they unleashed the same type of bloodshed in the name of Abkhaz separatism a handful of years back.**

- **These awful events once again prove that we cannot afford to ignore the dangerous linkages that exist between separatism on one side of the Caucasus mountains and the other.**
- **All separatists sow the seeds of great instability – all lawless zones can be sanctuaries for criminals that conduct acts of terror.**
- **It is our moral obligation to put an end to the unilateral practice of reaching out to separatists without the consent or knowledge of the authorities in Tbilisi.**
- **And to defeat that evil, we must not allow double standards to persist - where assistance is rendered to separatists in Georgia without concern for the effect on the region as a whole.**
- **The time has come for Georgia and Russia to enter a new stage of cooperation that will have as its goal the defeat of this common enemy.**
- **It is our moral obligation and profound responsibility to more robustly join forces in this cause.**
- **And here I firmly agree with President Putin, you can never negotiate with terrorists, or cut deals with killers.**
- **While we may and we should, work with moderate elements who seek peace without violence...**
- **...We must forever do away with the Basayev's of the world...no matter what side of the border they terrorize.**
- **Today more than ever before, I want to underscore Georgia's readiness to work more closely with President Putin and the Russian Federation to combat and remove this common threat.**
- **Because all forms of violent separatism – be they in Tskinali, Grozny or Sokhumi, represent destabilizing factors for Russia and Georgia alike.**
- **By working together more robustly, I am confident we can make great progress in reducing this shared risk.**

### ***THE MECHANICS OF A NEW RELATIONSHIP***

- **I believe there are a number of concrete initiatives we can start today that will bring immediate results....**

- **...Initiatives that again confirm Georgia's status as a "test case" for the promotion of a foreign policy that leads us away from the outdated politics of domination, advancing instead our shared interests and great potential for regional cooperation.**
- **The means finally coming to grips with the need and necessity to close outdated Russian military bases, left over from a period that no longer exists.**
- **And here let me be clear about one point, Georgia does not plan to have any new foreign military bases on its territory...**
- **...And we would appreciate any help in strengthening our security situation in order to be more responsible contributors.**
- **Today, Georgia need bridges not bases...roads and not rockets....and we need cooperation, not competition when it comes to eliminating sources of instability and terror.**
- **The mechanics of a new relationship with Russia means pooling our resources and efforts to create a joint anti-terrorism center so that Georgia and Russia can enjoy the same level of cooperation that Georgia and the US share in the fight against terror.**
- **It means expanding joint border patrols to the entire Russian/Georgian frontier, so that no holes are left exposed.**
- **So that the era of zero-sum thinking can be replaced with policies that lead to win-win.**
- **These efforts will require greater sharing of information, intelligence, and a greater degree of trust – all of which Georgia stands ready to conduct.**
- **Why? Because these actions serve the cause of peace...**
- **Why? Because these actions serve to defeat the threat of terrorism and strengthen the safety and security of our populations...**
- **Why? Because these actions are part of what it means to remain a responsible member of the international community of nations...**
- **And finally, because we have no reasonable alternative, failure is not an option.**

- **In order to replace mistrust and misperceptions that sometimes derail our progress, Georgia today proposes establishing a new, Russian-Georgian joint body, where bilateral issues and misgivings could be regularly discussed and considered.**
- **So that our relations may never again suffer from misunderstandings or misinterpretations.**
- **This Council could consider issues like visa policy, concerns about over-flight or border violations...**
- **It could even consider issues such as protection of the rights of Russian citizens now living in Georgia...so that no inhabitant of Georgia will ever feel forgotten or unprotected.**
- **...All this and more are necessary because there is nothing more important than serving the cause of peace.**
- **And I confident and I am optimistic that my colleague, President Putin – desires the very same for his people.**

### ***MOVING INTO THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY...***

- **I believe Georgia will remain a "test case" in our part of the world for the nearest period to come – as we build our democratic institutions and further advance cooperation.**
- **Cooperation between the US, the EU, Russia and the countries of the Caucasus has to become the litmus test for a new relationship...**
- **...Whether it is in the fight against terrorism, or the development of energy transit and trade lines – this region has to become a model of cooperation and stability that benefits everyone...**
- **That special outlook explains why Georgia will continue to advance regional cooperation with GUUAM countries...**
- **...That outlook explains why development of security and prosperity in the BSEC framework is so important.**
- **And that outlook explains why Georgia will continue to move forward down the gradual BUT steady path of Euro-Atlantic integration...**

- **By following this path, I am sure we can unlock the great potential for peace, prosperity and stability of this great region.**
- **A task I look forward to pursuing with all Georgia's friends and neighbors.**
- **Mr. President, I thank you for your attention and support.**