

P R E S S R E L E A S E

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Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
concerning the situation in Abkhazia (Georgia)

The European Union is seriously concerned by the situation in Georgia. The shooting down of a UNOMIG helicopter and the air attacks on villages in the Kodor gorge region are unacceptable. The European Union offers its condolences to UNOMIG for the death of the military observers and the members of the helicopter crew and to the Georgian government for the civilian victims in those villages. It would like to see a full explanation of these worrying events.

The European Union points again to the need to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia and reaffirms its interest in regional stability and security.

The European Union calls on all parties concerned to abstain from military action and political pressure in order to prevent a further escalation or worsening of the situation in Georgia, including Abkhazia, and to step up efforts to work together to combat terrorism and crime.

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The European Union calls on Russia and Georgia to strengthen controls on borders, including those with Abkhazia (Georgia), to prevent Chechen rebels crossing them.

The European Union calls on the parties in the Abkhazian conflict and on the Group of Friends of the UN Secretary-General for Georgia to resume their efforts, on the basis of the Secretary-General's proposals, to reach a peaceful, comprehensive solution to the conflict in Abkhazia, a solution which respects Georgia's territorial integrity.

The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union, the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, and the EFTA countries, members of the European Economic Area align themselves with this declaration.

