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APPEAL OF THE UN OBSERVER MISSION IN GEORGIA

Recently, the security situation in the zone of conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia has worsened. In particular, the Gali region has seen an increase in kidnappings, murders and robberies. The victims of this continuing crime wave tend mainly to be the peaceful population. Criminality and impunity have created a threat to the population, to the stability in the region and to the peace process.

Increased tension in the security sphere is evident on the eve of the anniversary of the end of hostilities in Abkhazia, Georgia, and also in the lead-up to the parliamentary elections in Georgia, which are due to take place on 2 November 2003.

The fighting of ten years ago, the loss of lives and the destruction have left deep wounds in the memories of people to this day. Ill -thought actions in the current fragile stability could well result in serious implications.

Throughout its presence in the zone of conflict, UNOMIG pursued and continues to pursue all efforts for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. The peace process received a positive impulse recently.

Agreements reached during two high-level meetings of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General in Geneva, under the chairmanship of the UN, and also during the meeting of the Georgian and Russian presidents in Sochi, bode well for progress in the peace process.

Meetings on security guarantees, on the question of economic rehabilitation, and likewise on the organisation of safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees to their previous places of habitation, in the first instance to the Gali region have begun.

In order to improve the general security situation in the zone of conflict, a plan was developed and is being implemented on improving the effectiveness of local law enforcement agencies, in close cooperation with both the Georgian and Abkhaz sides.

In expressing its concerns over the current tensions, UNOMIG urges the Abkhaz and Georgian sides to refrain from any acts and militant rhetoric that could destabilise the situation. For its part, UNOMIG again confirms its readiness to take all measures to overcome the existing lack of trust between the parties and to continue constructive negotiations on a settlement of the conflict.

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