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United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia

For Immediate Release

PRESS RELEASE

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ABKHAZ ELECTIONS

The United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) expresses its concern at the Sukhumi authorities' intention to hold self-styled elections of deputies to the "Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia."

In its resolutions, including that dated 31 January 2002, the United Nations Security Council has repeatedly reaffirmed the unacceptability of the demographic changes resulting from the conflict, as well as the inalienable right of all refugees and internally displaced persons affected by the conflict to return to their homes in a secure and dignified manner. This in accordance with international law as set out in the Quadrapartite Agreement dated 4 April 1994. Since large numbers of refugees and displaced persons are still prevented from undertaking such returns, these self-styled elections are to be considered unacceptable and illegitimate, just as similar elections held in the past in Abkhazia, Georgia, were so deemed.

UNOMIG appeals to the Abkhaz authorities to refrain from acts that may hamper the peace process, especially at the current crossroads, when the UN-prepared document on the distribution of competences between Tbilisi and Sukhumi is ready to be tabled with the full support of all the Group of Friends members. This in order to achieve a comprehensive settlement, which must include an agreement over the future political status of Abkhazia within the State of Georgia.

UNOMIG urges the Abkhaz side in particular to accept the document when it is presented to both parties in the near future, to accord it full and open consideration, and to engage in constructive negotiations on its substance.

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