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PRESS RELEASE

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**UN UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS CONCLUDES
VISIT TO GEORGIA**

The United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Marie Guehenno, wraps up his three-day visit to Georgia, optimistic about the desire of the Abkhaz and Georgian sides to resume talks. Mr. Guehenno stressed that he had held constructive discussions with the leadership of both sides at the highest levels, who showed an openness to reengage and resume the peace process. Mr. Guehenno stated that, "Although differences on substantive issues remain, I found willingness on both sides to address them in a practical and pragmatic way".

Mr. Guehenno emphasized that he ends his visit "hopeful that the openness I found during this visit will lead to more substantive exchanges at the high-level Geneva meeting of the Group of Friends of the UN Secretary-General, and eventually produce concrete results in the three priority areas — political and security matters, the return of refugees and internally displaced persons, and economic cooperation — to the benefit of those most affected by the conflict". He reiterated his conviction that "a focus on the people is the best way to lay the foundation for an eventual resolution of this terrible crisis that has affected so many for too long".

Mr. Guehenno underscored that the Geneva meeting scheduled for the springtime presents a fresh opportunity for both sides to meet after a long delay in the talks: "I feel quite confident about the willingness of both sides to consider further steps towards a peaceful resolution."

During his visit to Tbilisi and Sukhumi, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations also met with the Group of Friends of the UN Secretary General, the Commander of the Commonwealth of Independent States Peacekeeping Force, and representatives of international organizations, civil society and UNOMIG military and civilian staff.

This marks Mr. Guehenno's third visit to Georgia and the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG); his previous visits were in November 2002 and November 2003. As on previous occasions, throughout his visit Mr. Guehenno was accompanied by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Georgia, Ms Heidi Tagliavini.

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