

Elements for a Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict¹

(Steinmeier's² Peace Plan)

June 2008

Tree-phase approach:

First phase: assurances of non-use of force; security guarantees incl. for the Kodori-valley; general agreement on principle of and continuation of IDP and refugee return; consideration of international security arrangements;

Second phase: confidence building by practical projects – to be initiated by an international donors conference in Berlin; return of IDPs and refugees; practical cooperation in the fields of security, trade, travel, selected legal issues, culture and sports under the political status quo;

Third phase: agreed settlement of Abkhazia's political status in the framework of internationally mediated, bilateral negotiations.

Phase 1: Guaranteeing security – laying foundations for an orderly process of refugee and IDP return – beginning an unconditional dialogue

Both sides refrain from use of or threat of force and inflammatory rhetoric. They will exchange declarations similar to the recently drafted 'Declaration by the Georgian and Abkhaz sides on Security and Non-resumption of Hostilities (May 2008)' – possibly together with their endorsement of this document.

The parties will – drawing as appropriate on existing bodies – establish a framework for a direct high-level dialogue as soon as possible e.g. through setting up a permanent steering committee. UNOMIG and the FSG should participate as facilitators. Other international organizations can contribute if the parties so agree.

The UN/FSG are ready to consult with the parties in order to develop appropriate security guarantees including for the Kodori valley. The parties will convene a working group under the steering committee to work out the necessary details.

¹ Peace Agreements, GEO-PEACE DATABASE, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, ICCN. www.iccn.ge

² Frank-Walter Steinmeier, German Foreign Minister (2005-2009), acting as the coordinator for the five-member UN Friends Group, a grouping of Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and the United States that is trying to resolve the conflict.

Both sides will consider the implications of the assurances of non-use of force and security guarantees that they provide in this phase for existing security arrangements, including a possible deployment of international police. Should a threat for security arise, existing mechanisms would be implemented to avoid a military confrontation.

Based on a general acceptance of the right of return of all IDPs and refugees to Abkhazia as well as the obligation to safeguard their full range of rights, the parties will agree on the modalities for their return to their former permanent places of residence in accordance with relevant agreements and resolutions of the United Nations Council. Details will be discussed within a working group of the two parties on refugees and IDRs under steering committee.

Within the initial phase the sides engage in array of confidence-building and humanitarian measures including those proposed by the Group of Friends in 2007. Emphasis should be put on ending the embargo on civilian trade and opening economic opportunities for the Abkhaz to trade with Georgian and international partners.

The objectives of this initial phase should be accomplished not later than 15 months from the endorsement of this document.

Phase 2: Confidence-building: Normalizing life of the communities by trade, good neighbourhood, cultural exchange and peaceful dispute

In light of progress achieved, an international conference convened as soon as possible under participation of the EU, the UN, the OSCE, IFIs as well as interested bilateral donors such as the Russian Federation and the USA will define confidence-building and economic or infrastructural projects aiming at the reconstruction of Abkhazia areas neighbouring the zone of conflict. Donors should pledge their support for these projects. Germany has offered to host the conference.

Refugees and IDPs continue to return and reintegrate into their neighbourhoods. Rights of all communities during this process will be safeguarded by appropriate legal provisions. Details will be discussed within the working group on refugees and IDPs under the steering committee.

Conditions will be established for the liberalization of trade and freedom of movement.

Projects for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Abkhazia and areas neighbouring the zone of conflict, including regional cooperation, will be implemented by a steering committee on rehabilitation with the participation of international donors.

The parties shall encourage communities where necessary to work with NGOs to create adequate living conditions as to schooling, basic inter-ethnic cooperation in

administrative issues, and communal micro-projects. They should be encouraged and supported in cultural and sports activities.

Phase 3: Agreed settlement of Abkhazia's political status

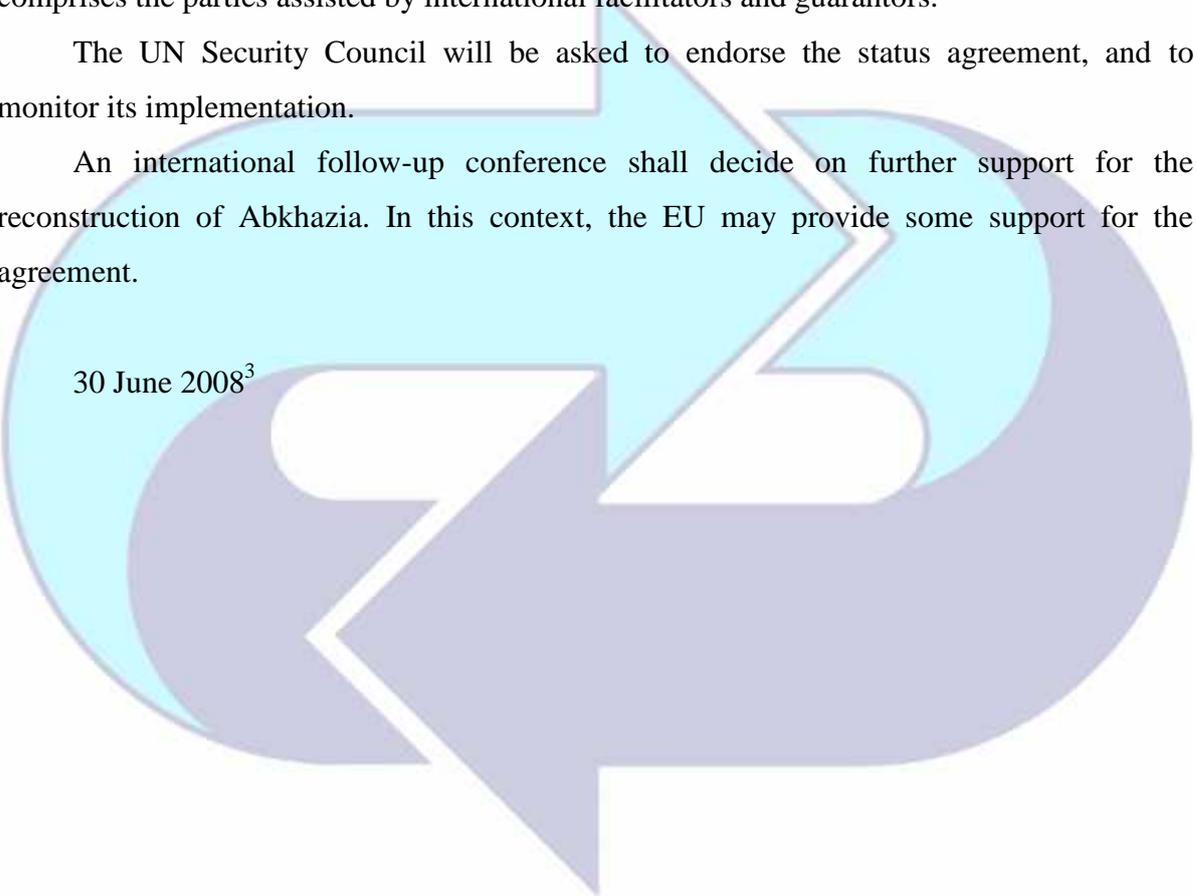
Phase 3 starts on the basis of a joint assessment by the parties facilitated by the UN/FSG of progress achieved so far in phases 1 and 2.

A working group is established to work out the political status of Abkhazia. The group comprises the parties assisted by international facilitators and guarantors.

The UN Security Council will be asked to endorse the status agreement, and to monitor its implementation.

An international follow-up conference shall decide on further support for the reconstruction of Abkhazia. In this context, the EU may provide some support for the agreement.

30 June 2008³



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³ Peace Agreements, GEO-PEACE DATABASE, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, ICCN.