



## European Security and Defence Assembly Assembly of Western European Union

*Fifty-ninth Plenary Session - Press Release No. 47/2010*

### **Georgia's DARCHIASHVILI lashes out at Russia's occupation**

**Paris, 1 December 2010** – Mr David DARCHIASHVILI, Chairman of the European Integration Committee of Georgia, gave an upbeat presentation of his country's progress since 2003 towards a modern and democratic state, but condemned the presence of between 10 000 and 15 000 Russian occupation troops on Georgian territory and their ongoing militarisation.

A new constitution had recently been adopted which enhanced parliament's control of the government; the judiciary was being strengthened, by judges being appointed for life and with the introduction of jury trials; the election system was being reformed, and work was in progress to improve media freedom, said Mr DARCHIASHVILI who was speaking on behalf of Mr David BAKRADZE, Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia.

On the 2008 conflict between Georgia and Russia, Mr DARCHIASHVILI said that Georgia was respecting the EU-brokered ceasefire of 12 August 2008 even though it was being "severely violated", and underlined that Georgia had "never used force" to achieve its objectives. He added that Russia's engagement with international institutions was an "imperative" for peace and prosperity, and that there were grounds for optimism as both Russia and Georgia were "genuinely interested" in cooperation.

Explaining the origins of the conflict, Mr DARCHIASHVILI said that they were "a complex mixture" of new and traditional threats faced by Georgia with regard to ethnicity, separatism, corruption and organised crime, which had found support within Russia because of resentment over Georgia's bid for sovereignty and its European future.

Responding to questions from the floor, Mr DARCHIASHVILI said that Russia had not been cooperative over coming to the negotiating table, but that he hoped for progress "in the nearest future". The Georgian Government was "ready to talk directly without preconditions," he said, adding that he hoped pragmatism would prevail on the Russian side sooner or later. He regretted that NATO and the rest of the international community had not forced Russia to address the issue of occupied Georgia, but "we are realists". However, he welcomed the fact that as regards its ambitions to join the Alliance, the Georgian issue had been separated from "the linkage with Ukraine", since Georgia did not waver and Ukraine kept changing its mind.

Mr DARCHIASHVILI confirmed that Russia was building a naval base on the Abkhazia shore of the Black Sea and that 10 000 to 15 000 Russian troops were present in "all the occupied territories". He questioned why Russia had deployed strategic S300 systems which "have an operational range that goes far beyond the current line of confrontation". He insisted that Russia wanted Georgia to follow its orders instead of following its own destiny and explained that the country's new constitution would come into force after the forthcoming presidential and parliamentary elections. He went on to say that the authorities were still processing applications for the return of the descendants of those who were forcefully deported from Georgia in Soviet times. In the meantime, he stressed that some 500 000 people out of a population of four million had either been displaced internally or fled abroad and become refugees since the collapse of USSR.

Mr DARCHIASHVILI paid tribute to the European Security and Defence Assembly, saying it had played an important role in promoting a dialogue between eastern and western Europe since the Soviet Union had disappeared. In particular, he applauded the Assembly's decision to admit Georgia as a partner country.

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