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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement by Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, U.S. Permanent Representative, on the situation in Georgia, at the Security Council, August 10, 2008

Mr. President,

The United States has asked for this emergency meeting in view of dramatic and dangerous developments over the past 24 hours in and around Georgia.

First, there has been an intensification of Russian military activity in the South Ossetian region. This includes an influx of many thousands of troops beyond the several hundred Russian peacekeepers present when this crisis began. Military operations against Georgian forces in the conflict zone have escalated dramatically.

Second, the conflict has expanded. A Russian backed military offensive has been launched in the Abkhazia region of Georgia. This was preceded by a demand from the Abkhaz for the UNOMIG's peacekeeping presence to be withdrawn from the Kodori valley, which has since been bombed. This is a direct challenge to the UN Security Council's mandated mission. Let there be no confusion about the significance of this point, since Abkhaz officials have stated their intention to drive Georgia militarily out of the upper Kodori valley.

Moreover, Russia has been attacking villages and cities elsewhere in Georgia, including threatening the Zug Didi region and air attacks against Tblisi's airport. Russian military attacks have also destroyed critical Georgian infrastructure, including seaports, airports, and other facilities.

Third, the result of this escalation against a sovereign state that has not posed direct threat to Russia, has increased casualties and humanitarian suffering for the people of Georgia, including in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Fourth, against this backdrop of heightened violence, the Russian forces are actually impeding the withdrawal of Georgian forces from South Ossetia. This is an unconscionable effort to continue the conflict and prevent the Georgians from taking concrete steps to de-escalate the situation.

Fifth, we continue to face the intransigent rejection by Russia to stop the violence. Georgia has offered a ceasefire and restoration of the status quo of August 6, but Russia refuses this reasonable position.

And finally, Russia continues to resist efforts by the international community to mediate this conflict which is now clearly and unquestionably one between Russia and Georgia.

In view of this deteriorating situation, we need to ask ourselves what can the Council do to stop the

violence, stop the aggression, and return to the status quo of August 6.

First, we have to draw the appropriate conclusions about what this conflict is and what it is not. Russia has claimed that its military operations were intended to protect its peacekeepers and the civilian population in South Ossetia. Yet, its reaction goes far beyond any reasonable measures required to do so. Indeed, its escalation of the conflict has been the immediate cause of increased loss of innocent life and humanitarian suffering.

Since Russia is impeding Georgian forces from withdrawing, rejecting a ceasefire, and continuing to carry out military attacks against civilian centers, its claims of a humanitarian purpose are clearly not credible.

Similarly, its expansion of the conflict to another separatist area in Georgia and attacks on the areas around Georgia's capital Tblisi suggest other motives and objectives.

Second, we must condemn the Russian military assault in the sovereign state of Georgia, the violation of the countries sovereignty and territorial integrity including the targeting of civilians and the campaign of terror against the Georgian population. Similarly we need to condemn the destruction of Georgian infrastructure and violations of the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Third, the Council must do what it can to ensure adherence with the provisions of the Charter and take actions to redress this threat to international peace and Security. This means respect for Article Two paragraph four which calls for all UN members to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.

Therefore, we believe the Council needs to take urgent action calling for an immediate ceasefire and the withdrawal of all forces to the status quo of August 6. This applies particularly to Russian combat forces that have been brought in over the past week. We cannot remain indifferent to this point.

We have begun discussing and are consulting with other members of the Security Council and a resolution calling for an immediate cease fire will be introduced shortly.

Fourth, I urgently urge the Russian Federation to carefully consider the implications of this aggression against the sovereign, democratic state of Georgia. Russia's relations with the rest of the world will clearly be affected by its continued assault on Georgia and its refusal to contribute to a peaceful solution of the crisis.

Thank You.