



Press Statement  
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Washington, DC  
April 18, 2008

## Georgia

We are deeply concerned by the April 16 Russian Presidential Instructions authorizing increased contacts between the Russian government and the separatist regimes in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, without the approval of the Georgian government. This step challenges Georgia's territorial integrity and would not be in keeping with Russia's status as a "facilitator" of the peace process.

We urge Russia to live up to its statements of support for the principles of Georgian sovereignty and territorial integrity and to repeal the April 16 instructions. We call on all parties to pursue a peaceful resolution of the separatist conflicts in Georgia. We encourage the Russian government to work constructively within the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General and other international frameworks to promote peaceful resolution of the conflicts.

As we have previously stated, we also regret the Russian decision to withdraw unilaterally from Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) economic and military sanctions on Abkhazia. While we recognize assurances that we have received from Russian government officials that Russia will continue to adhere to military sanctions against Abkhazia, the lifting of CIS sanctions has raised concerns over military transparency in the region. We believe the withdrawal of sanctions undermines the peace process.

The United States welcomes the new initiatives put forward by the Georgian president to advance a negotiated political resolution of the Abkhazia conflict. We urge the de facto authorities in Abkhazia to seriously consider these initiatives, as well as the previous confidence building measures proposed in Geneva in 2007.

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