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## **MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION**

to wind up the debate on statements by the Council and Commission

pursuant to Rule 103(2) of the Rules of Procedure

by Charles Tannock, Árpád Duka-Zólyomi, Elmar Brok, Karl von Wogau,  
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on behalf of the PPE-DE Group

on the situation in Georgia

**European Parliament resolution on the situation in Georgia**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part, which entered into force in 1999,
  - having regard to its previous resolutions on relations with the countries of the region, notably its recommendation of 26 February 2004 to the Council on EU policy towards the South Caucasus and its resolution of 14 October 2004 on the situation in Georgia,
  - having regard to its reports on the European Neighbourhood Policy, notably its report of 15 November 2007 on strengthening that policy,
  - having regard to the OSCE/ODIHR Final Report on the Election Observation Mission for the municipal elections in Georgia on 5 October 2006,
  - having regard to Rule 103(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas within a few weeks the domestic situation in Georgia has worsened and led to the deepest crisis since the Rose Revolution in 2003,
- B. whereas on 17 October a group of ten opposition parties joined forces in the so-called National Council of the General Public Movement and published a Manifesto outlining their goals that was partly supported by other opposition parliamentary groups, which goals included: democratic elections preceded by real competition between political parties and without the involvement of state institutions; reorganisation of the way in which the elections are administered, involving representatives of all political parties; establishment of a 'European-style' parliamentary system reducing the power of the executive branch; an independent judiciary and non-interference by government structures in the courts; restoration of territorial integrity and withdrawal of Russian peacekeeping forces/military contingents from Georgia; local self-governance; eradication of political violence, release of 'political prisoners' and investigation of unsolved deaths that occurred during the Shevardnadze and Saakashvili presidencies; rapprochement with NATO and the EU, and abolition of CIS membership; a call for Parliamentary elections according to schedule in spring instead of autumn 2008 and changes to the winner-takes-all electoral system,
- C. whereas the crisis culminated on 7 November when – after a series of previous opposition rallies during which the number of protesters reached 70 000 and then fell to a few hundred, who were then forced away from the main thoroughfare – riot troops used clubs, water cannons, tear gas and rubber bullets to break up fresh demonstrations which occurred, demonstrators were severely beaten, among them tens of journalists and the Georgian Public Defender (Ombudsman) Sozar Subari; whereas after the violent clashes

more than 500 people had to seek medical treatment; whereas on 7 November Imedi TV broadcast false and unfounded information about alleged plans by the police to storm the main Orthodox Cathedral, thus provoking masses of citizens in Tbilisi to take to the streets; whereas the same day, Imedi TV, Georgia's most important independent television broadcasting station, which is financially controlled by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, was forced off the air by the military police, and all other non-state broadcasters were banned from reporting news; whereas in the evening of 7 November President Saakashvili imposed a 15-day state of emergency which lasted 9 days,

- D. whereas President Saakashvili and some independent observers have accused Moscow of attempting to overthrow his government by staging opposition protests, and the President has said that the police crackdown on demonstrations was necessary to prevent the country from sliding into chaos,
- E. whereas Russian officials have repeatedly, as in several cases before, denied claims of interference in Georgian internal affairs and accused President Saakashvili of making anti-Russian statements to shore up his waning popularity,
- F. whereas on 13 November Russia's commander of military forces in the Caucasus, Gen. Andrei Popov, signed documents handing over to Georgia, one year ahead of schedule, the territory of Russia's last base at Batumi in the Ajara autonomous republic; whereas Russia completed the withdrawal of its troops from its other base in Georgia, Akhalkalaki, in June and had agreed to terminate the Batumi operations by October 2008; whereas according to a statement made the same day by Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Ground Troops Gen. Alexi Maslov, 'there are no more Russian troops in Georgia, there remain only peacekeepers in Abkhazia and those that are part of the combined forces in South Ossetia with the participation of Georgia'; whereas no neutral or Georgian state observer was allowed to check the situation at Gudauta base,
- G. whereas on 14 November, President Saakashvili, who has repeatedly accused Russia of backing separatist movements in the rebel provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, charged that Russia recently sent troops, several dozen armoured vehicles and artillery systems into Abkhazia that were not part of the peacekeeping operations there; whereas Russia's military chief of staff, Gen. Yuri Baluyevsky, denied these allegations as well and called President Saakashvili's statement 'information provocation',
- H. whereas on 10 November Matyas Eörsi and Kastriot Islami, co-rapporteurs for Georgia of the Monitoring Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) reminded the Georgian authorities to strictly abide by the principles of the rule of law in all their actions and to comply with the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights, especially those relating to freedom of expression, information and association, pointing out that police violence against peaceful demonstrations, shutting down private broadcasting stations or clamping down on information dissemination was unacceptable under any circumstances in a democratic system, and stressing that 'the freedom of the media has to be guaranteed without restrictions. The measures taken in the last few days in Georgia represent a huge step backwards from the aspiration to become a fully-fledged democratic state that respects the fundamental values of pluralistic democracy and human rights',

- I. whereas the Secretary General of NATO, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, who already in October underlined the need for greater political transparency and stricter compliance with the rule of law if Georgia wants to progress towards NATO membership, reacted to the events by emphasising that 'the imposition of emergency rule and the closure of media outlets in Georgia are of particular concern and not in line with Euro-Atlantic values',
- J. whereas on 12 November the Association of Commercial Television in Europe (ACT) expressed its deep shock and deep concern at the events which took place in Tbilisi, underlining that 'there are no circumstances in a democratic society which can justify military policemen forcing an independent broadcaster off air. The obligation to allow a pluralistic media sector, in which all views can be openly expressed, is a corner-stone of European democracy',
- K. whereas in a surprisingly conciliatory move on 8 November President Saakashvili proposed early presidential elections for 5 January to be coupled with a referendum on the date of the next parliamentary elections and on 16 November lifted the state of emergency,
1. Expresses its solidarity with the people of Georgia and its commitment to support their young democracy, the independence of their state and its territorial integrity during this crisis;
  2. Welcomes the political, democratic and economic progress achieved by President Mikhail Saakashvili and the present Georgian Government in comparison with the former president Eduard Shevardnadze;
  3. Expresses its deep concern at recent developments that have taken place in Georgia, with the violent police crackdown on peaceful demonstrations, the closing down of independent media outlets and the declaration of a state of emergency for 15 days as the latest escalations;
  4. Urges the parties concerned to exercise the necessary restraint and refrain from using language and actions that could further deepen the political crisis;
  5. Calls on the opposition first of all to use parliamentary structures to express its positions before taking to the streets;
  6. Points out that the Georgian authorities' handling of dissent risks eroding its democratic credentials; calls therefore upon the Georgian authorities to fully respect the right of peaceful protest and to restore immediately full media freedom;
  7. Calls on the Georgian authorities to order a thorough, impartial and independent investigation into the serious violations of human rights and freedom of the media, notably the allegations of excessive use of force by law enforcement officials, in order to identify all those responsible, bring them to trial and apply the penal and/or administrative sanctions provided by law;
  8. Welcomes the early lifting of the state of emergency by President Saakashvili on 16 November and urges all parties involved to immediately engage in a constructive dialogue

in order to defuse the current situation and find appropriate and prompt solutions to the core issues; considers that the existing political tensions must be solved within the democratic institutions and without infringing democratic principles or fundamental rights, including freedom of the media;

9. Considers the lifting of the state of emergency and the call for early presidential elections a positive step that has already helped to ease the tensions and demonstrated that international pressure via very open and strong statements by all major external players in the West as well as the negative feedback in the international media can have a positive impact on the domestic situation in the country;
10. Building on this experience, calls upon the Council and Commission, the EU Member States, NATO and the US to become more active in highlighting political grievances and shortcomings in and around Georgia, including in the implementation of the ENP Action Plan; observes that many allegations of violations of democratic procedures and human rights in Georgia were not followed up in the last few years; is therefore of the opinion that a more open international debate could furthermore strengthen pluralistic public discourse and democratic development in Georgia;
11. Calls upon the Georgian authorities to ensure free and fair elections in full accordance with international standards; calls upon the Government to respect the division of powers in the Georgian political system, to refrain from using 'administrative resources' during the election campaign and to guarantee freedom of expression to all candidates; welcomes the readiness of the Georgian authorities to allow international observers to monitor the elections;
12. Calls upon the Georgian authorities to reform the country's election legislation in line with the recommendations of the OSCE/ODIHR and the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe; welcomes the lowering of the election threshold from 7 to 5%;
13. Calls upon all political forces in Georgia to collaborate in drafting a law to regulate audiovisual activity in order to ensure with the assistance of European experts that existing regulations which guarantee freedom of expression and fair public debate are further improved and harmonised with European principles;
14. Encourages the Georgian political elite and civil society to engage in a debate about the separation of powers in the political system which could lead to more efficient scrutiny of the actions of the executive and pluralisation of the public debate on many crucial issues, ranging from the social implications of economic reform and the 'Russian factor' in Georgian domestic politics to different approaches towards frozen conflicts;
15. Calls upon Council and Commission to prevent Russia from abusing the situation in Georgia; notes that, although there is no clear evidence whether the Georgian Government's accusations that Russia is deploying additional troops in Abkhazia are true, the Council and Commission have to make it very clear to Russia that such steps would be considered absolutely intolerable; furthermore urges the Council and Commission to call upon Russia to change its overall approach towards Georgia and stop using economic relations as a political weapon; stresses that such steps should be part of a more decisive EU policy towards its Eastern neighbourhood which should not reject cooperation with

Russia, but on the contrary offer it wherever possible (for example in the areas of regional cooperation, crisis management and peacekeeping); considers, however, that at the same time the EU must adopt a more resolute stance on crucial issues in the region and become more deeply involved despite Russia's current negative attitude towards the EU's role in their common neighbourhood; underlines that, in the end, it is up to the Russian political elite to understand that it is not so much geopolitical rivalry with the EU which diminishes Russian influence in its neighbourhood, but Russia's own destructive policy towards some of its neighbours;

16. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Secretary General of the United Nations, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Secretary General of NATO, the President and Parliament of Georgia and the State Duma and President of the Russian Federation.