



Security Council

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Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia

I. Introduction

1. The Security Council, by its resolution 1656 (2006) of 31 January 2006, extended the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia until 31 March 2006. The present report provides an update on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, and UNOMIG since my report of 13 January 2006 (S/2006/19).

II. Political process

2. During the period under review, the Mission, under the leadership of my Special Representative, continued its efforts to maintain stability in the zone of conflict and to promote dialogue and cooperation between the Georgian and Abkhaz sides in the framework of the United Nations-led peace process.

3. On 24 January 2006, UNOMIG chaired a ministerial-level meeting between the Georgian and Abkhaz sides on security issues, in particular in the Gali district, at its Gali Sector headquarters; the Commander of the Collective Peacekeeping Forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) also participated. The parties signed a protocol in which they agreed to intensify cooperation in order to combat and prevent criminal activities. For this purpose, they agreed to nominate coordinators at the regional level, exchange relevant operational information, elaborate a joint action plan and appoint focal points for the mass media to provide verified information about the situation on the ground.

4. Concurrently, UNOMIG chaired an expert meeting between the two sides on cooperation on avian influenza prevention. The parties agreed on a number of response measures, including the nomination of focal points on both sides, the establishment of direct communication through a hotline and the provision of relevant information, material and technical support. These measures were subsequently adopted by the heads of delegations to the security meeting.

5. On 2 and 3 February 2006, senior representatives of the Group of Friends met under the chairmanship of the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations in Geneva. The Georgian and Abkhaz delegations were led by State Minister Giorgi Khaindrava and the de facto Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sergei Shamba, respectively. The Friends underlined the need for a peaceful settlement of

the conflict in the framework of the relevant Security Council resolutions and reaffirmed their commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. They agreed on the need to address the core political issues of the conflict, in addition to continuing work on confidence-building measures. In this context, they recalled their support for the principles contained in the paper on “Basic Principles for the Distribution of Competencies between Tbilisi and Sukhumi” (see S/2002/88, para. 3) and welcomed additional ideas that the parties might be willing to offer. The Friends also welcomed the continued good cooperation between UNOMIG and the CIS peacekeeping force. They supported the registration of returnees in the Gali district by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in line with international standards, which is to commence in April 2006.

6. In their separate meetings with the parties, the Friends stressed the urgent need for tangible results in the peace process, including a commitment by the Georgian and Abkhaz sides to address substantive political issues. They urged the parties to finalize, without delay, the package of documents on the non-use of force and on the return of internally displaced persons and refugees (see S/2006/19, para. 5), and to follow up on a possible meeting of their highest leadership. They stressed the need for the Georgian side to address seriously legitimate Abkhaz security concerns and to avoid steps and actions that could be seen as threatening. On the Abkhaz side, they underlined the need to address seriously the issues of return and the security and human rights concerns of returnees and to publicly reassure the local population, especially in the Gali district, that their residency rights and identity would be respected. The Abkhaz side was also urged to implement, without further delay past commitments on the opening of a United Nations human rights sub-office in the town of Gali and the deployment of UNOMIG police and the education of local residents in their native Georgian language in the Gali district. Abkhaz proposals on these issues announced prior to the meeting were welcomed but were seen as not being fully satisfactory in substance or pace.

7. On their part, the Georgian and Abkhaz representatives recognized the importance of finalizing the package of documents referred to in paragraph 6 above and undertook to continue to work on setting up a meeting of their highest leadership. They welcomed the planned registration of returnees in the Gali district. In its statement, the Georgian side stressed its concern about the human rights situation in the Gali district, the issue of returns and the need for strict neutrality by the CIS peacekeeping force in implementing its mandate. The Abkhaz side conveyed its strong concerns about what it referred to as the increased militarization by the Georgian side and stressed the stabilizing role of the CIS peacekeeping force. At the same time, both sides acknowledged the need to maintain a constructive and results-oriented dialogue and expressed appreciation for the role of UNOMIG and my Special Representative.

8. My Special Representative facilitated additional informal consultations between the Georgian and Abkhaz delegations prior to and following the meeting. While in Geneva, the parties met, for the first time jointly, with senior representatives of UNHCR to discuss the return of internally displaced persons and refugees.

9. On 15 February 2006, further to its resolution of 11 October 2005 on the “Current situation in the conflict regions on the territory of Georgia and ongoing

peace operations” (see S/2005/657, para. 13), the Parliament of Georgia adopted a resolution requesting that the Georgian Government pursue a revision of the Sochi agreement of 24 June 1992 relating to South Ossetia, as well as the replacement of the peacekeeping forces there by an international peacekeeping operation.

III. Operational activities

10. During the reporting period, the military situation in the conflict zone remained generally calm, with no violations of the 1994 Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces reported. The establishment of a coordinator mechanism between the sides to address urgent security matters (see para. 3 above) also contributed to a relatively calm crime situation. However, two violent incidents created tensions on the ground and between the sides: the killing of a Gali resident by Abkhaz de facto law enforcement officers on 14 February; and the killing of four civilians by a group of unidentified armed men in the Gali district on 8 March. Both incidents are being investigated by the joint fact-finding group. UNOMIG military observers continued daily ground patrols in the Gali and Zugdidi sectors. Representatives of the two parties, UNOMIG and the CIS peacekeeping force maintained close contact, including within the framework of weekly quadripartite meetings and meetings of the joint fact-finding group. UNOMIG did not conduct patrols in the Kodori valley during this period.

11. The UNOMIG police continued to operate on the Zugdidi side of the ceasefire line only. It conducted crime scene investigation training for the Gali de facto Prosecutor’s office and the forensic unit of the militia in Sukhumi. It also facilitated a six-week training course for 12 Georgian police officers at the Estonian Police Academy and a one-week course on tactical training for six Georgian police officers at the International Training Centre in Hungary.

12. The United Nations human rights office in Sukhumi continued its activities to protect and promote human rights on the Abkhaz side of the ceasefire line in cooperation with other international partners. UNOMIG also continued to implement quick impact projects and began implementing the rehabilitation programme in the Gali, Tkvarcheli, Ochamchira and Zugdidi districts, financed by the European Commission (see S/2005/657, para. 30). On 1 March 2006, a free shuttle bus service started operating across the Inguri river bridge, easing travel across the ceasefire line for local residents. The project is administered by UNOMIG and financed for an initial period by the UNOMIG trust fund. The Government of Germany has expressed its readiness to contribute to the continuation of the shuttle bus service. United Nations agencies and other international organizations continued their activities to assist vulnerable groups on both sides of the ceasefire line.

IV. Financial aspects

13. The General Assembly, by its resolution 59/304 of 22 June 2005, appropriated the amount of \$34.6 million (gross), equivalent to \$2.88 million per month, for the maintenance of the Observer Mission for the period from 1 July 2005 to 30 June 2006. Should the Security Council decide to extend the mandate of UNOMIG

beyond 31 March 2006, the cost of maintaining the Observer Mission until 30 June 2006 would be limited to the monthly amounts approved by the Assembly.

14. As at 31 December 2005, unpaid assessed contributions to the UNOMIG special account amounted to \$12.7 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at that date amounted to \$2.9 billion.

15. As at 6 March 2006, the amount owed for equipment costs totalled \$99,061. Owing to the Mission's precarious financial situation, reimbursement of contingent-owned equipment costs has been suspended since 1 October 2004 and continues to be in arrears.

V. Observations

16. It is essential that the Georgian and Abkhaz sides actively follow up on the understandings reached at the Geneva meeting of the Group of Friends. In particular, early finalization of the documents on the non-use of force and on the return of internally displaced persons and refugees would be a strong indication of their commitment to make tangible progress in the peace process. Moreover, a substantive meeting between their highest leaders would be a major confidence-building measure and a welcome step forward. At the same time, without serious efforts to also address the core political issues of the conflict, prospects for a sustainable solution to the conflict will remain distant. I urge the parties to explore options and modalities of how best to approach those issues. My Special Representative will continue her efforts to assist the parties. The steadfast and unified support of the Group of Friends will remain important for future progress.

17. UNOMIG continues to play a key role in maintaining stability in the conflict zone and in facilitating progress towards a sustainable political solution of the conflict. I therefore recommend that the Mission's mandate be extended for six months, until 30 September 2006. I urge the parties to ensure the security and freedom of movement of all UNOMIG personnel and, as a matter of priority, bring the perpetrators of criminal acts against the Mission to justice.

18. In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation to my Special Representative, Heidi Tagliavini, the Chief Military Observer, Major General Niaz Muhammad Khan Khattak, and all the men and women of UNOMIG for their tireless and courageous work in the service of peace under difficult and often dangerous circumstances.

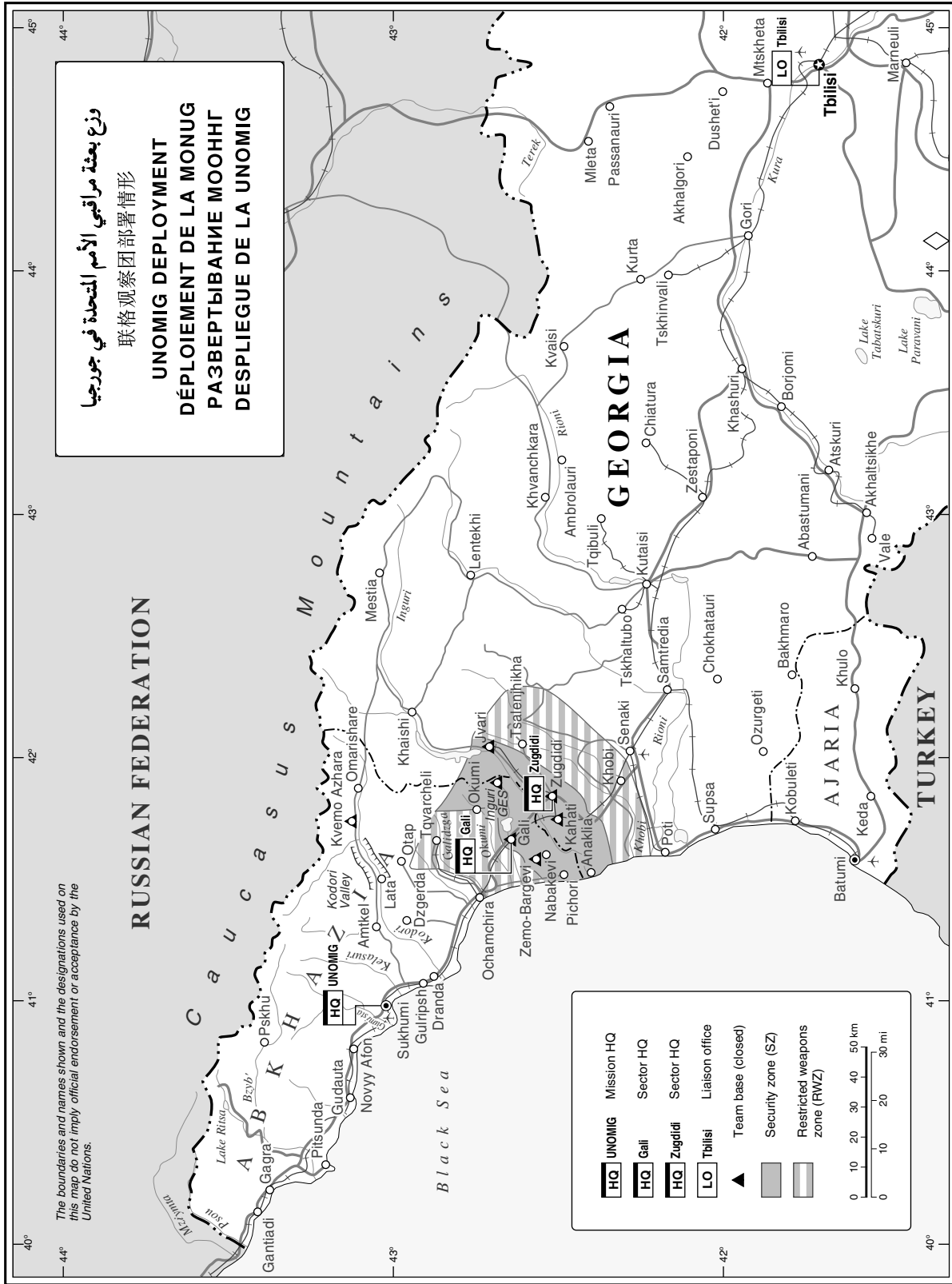
Annex

Countries providing military observers and police personnel (as at 1 March 2006)

<i>Country</i>	<i>Military observers</i>
Albania	3
Austria	2
Bangladesh	7
Croatia	1
Czech Republic	5
Denmark	5
Egypt	6*
France	3
Germany	12
Greece	5
Hungary	7
Indonesia	4
Jordan	8
Pakistan	8
Poland	5
Republic of Korea	7
Romania	1
Russian Federation	3
Sweden	3
Switzerland	4
Turkey	5
Ukraine	5
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	7
United States of America	2
Uruguay	3
Total	121

* Including the Chief Military Observer.

<i>Country</i>	<i>Civilian police personnel</i>
Germany	3
Ghana	1
Hungary	1
India	1
Poland	2
Russian Federation	2
Switzerland	3
Total	13



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Department of Peacekeeping Operations
Cartographic Section