Introduction

The OSCE Mission to Georgia was established in December 1992 at the invitation of the Georgian Government. The invitation followed the signing of the Sochi Agreement in June 1992 by the Russian Federation and Georgia. The Agreement introduced measures to facilitate the peaceful resolution of the Georgian – Ossetian conflict including a cease fire and the withdrawal of heavy calibre weapons from the zone of conflict. It brought open hostilities between the two sides to an end. The conflict started when Georgia abolished the autonomous status of South Ossetia as it existed during the Soviet era and when the South Ossetian side proclaimed independence from Georgia as the Republic of South Ossetia. The self-proclaimed Republic of South Ossetia has never received international recognition.

The Mission’s early focus in the country was on the Georgian – Ossetian conflict, but it has since expanded considerably to include aspects of human dimension as well as the monitoring and reporting of movements across the border between Georgia and the Russian Federation. The Mission is currently involved in the following areas which are directly linked to politico-military aspects of security:

- Monitoring the Joint Peacekeeping Forces (JPKF) in the Georgian-Ossetian zone of conflict
- Collection of small arms in the Georgian-Ossetian zone of conflict
- Promotion of a Special Police Coordination Centre (SCC) in the Georgian-Ossetian zone of conflict aimed at enhancing co-operation between the law enforcement bodies of the two conflicting sides
- Monitoring the border between Georgia and the Republics of Ingushetia, Chechnya and Dagestan of the Russian Federation
- Recycling and destruction of stockpiles of ammunition and bombs on former military bases in Georgia
- Destruction of dangerous chemicals
located on former military bases in Georgia
- Assisting in building a strong civil society as a long-term stability concept
- Human rights in Abkhazia and supporting the UN-led peace process

**Mandate of the Mission**

The Mission’s mandate covers three areas of activity:
- 1992 Conflict Resolution in the Georgian-Ossetian zone of conflict
- 1994 Human Dimension for the building of a strong civil society
- 1999-2003 Conflict Prevention (Border Monitoring Operation)

**Georgian-Ossetian Zone of Conflict**

The Mission has been implementing its conflict resolution mandate in the zone of conflict since its deployment to the region in December 1992. From 1992 to 1997 the Mission operated from Tbilisi, as the necessary conditions for the establishment of a permanent presence in the zone of conflict did not exist. In April 1997 the Mission finally opened its Field Office in Tskhinvali where two Mission members, a diplomat and a military officer, are now deployed on a permanent basis.

In accordance with a decision of the Joint Control Commission, the body set up under the Sochi Agreement as a mechanism to facilitate the peaceful negotiation of the conflict, a Joint Peacekeeping Force (JPKF) was deployed in the zone of conflict in July 1992. The force consists of three battalions, one from Russia, one from Georgia and one from North Ossetia – Alania. The JPKF is supported by a group of observers from each of the three contingents. The JPKF in the Georgian-Ossetian zone of conflict represents a unique model of peacekeeping operations, as the contributing sides to the force were active participants in the conflict. The JPKF is the main source of stability in the zone of conflict and it ensures stability by deploying observation posts, mobile and permanent checkpoints throughout the zone. It also supports and maintains a high level of co-operation with the law enforcement agencies from the Georgian and Ossetian sides.

The Mission’s military activities in the Georgian-Ossetian zone of conflict are mainly concerned with monitoring the security and military situation in the area, co-operation with the Joint Peacekeeping Forces (JPKF), reporting on breaches of the cease fire, confidence building and providing an instrument of early warning. The work is carried out by means of daily briefings and meetings with the JPKF, weekly meetings with the law enforcement agencies from both sides, monitoring patrols throughout the zone of conflict and the collection of small arms and ammunition in co-operation with the JPKF.

The Mission is implementing a number of confidence building measures in the zone of conflict as part of its efforts to support the process of conflict resolution.

Since January 2002 the Mission has been actively engaged in the implementa-
tion of small community based projects in the zone in exchange for the voluntary hand-in of weapons and ammunition by the local population. The weapons and ammunition are finally destroyed in the presence of the law enforcement agencies. The projects are funded by OSCE participating states and the main focus of the Mission is on confidence building, getting the two communities to work together on initiatives that are of benefit to them both. To date eight projects have been completed, two are ongoing and at least seven are under consideration. The projects represent a wide range of activities, including road repair, irrigation canal repair and the provision of medical equipment for hospitals and clinics. While the program is still in the early stages of development, it has considerable potential for reaching out to the people who need assistance most and for the development of confidence building between the sides.

In terms of enhancing security in the zone of conflict, the weapons collection program aims at achieving the following:

- To reduce the amount of weapons and ammunition in the hands of the local community
- To promote confidence building measures between the sides and to impress upon them that there is an alternative to conflict
- To assist in rebuilding small but key components of the infrastructure which have been damaged or destroyed during the conflict
- To further promote the presence of the OSCE in the zone of conflict

One of the key elements of conflict resolution and confidence building is the provision of a high standard of policing. While there is a high level of co-operation between the JPKF and the law enforcement agencies of both sides, there is a growing need to build and nurture the confidence of the local population in the law enforcement agencies. Such confidence in the law enforcement agencies will eventually lead to more stability and a feeling of safety and security in the region. This feeling of stability, safety and security can also have a very positive effect on other aspects of the resolution of the conflict, in particular the complicated issue of the return of refugees and IDPs. Additionally, there is a need to tackle the high level of criminality which exists in the post-conflict era.

In recognition of these factors the Mission facilitated the setting up of a joint Georgian-Ossetian Special Police Coordination Centre (SCC) in 2002 and with the assistance of EU funding the SCC was provided with the necessary technical and financial support to become an operational police unit.

The Mission is now in the process of formulating measures to further enhance the operational capacity and effectiveness of the SCC. Following a recent analysis by international police experts the Mission will be recommending that the SCC should become more involved in com-
munity policing by means of patrolling, increased interaction with the local population and should operate as a police unit focused on preventative rather than reactive measures. The provision of internationally recognized police training will also be recommended.

**Border Monitoring Operation**

The Border Monitoring Operation (BMO) was first established in December 1999 in response to a request from the Georgian Government for assistance in preventing a spillover of the Chechen conflict into Georgia. As a result of the Chechen conflict, a considerable number of Chechen refugees crossed the border into Georgia and were moved to the Pankisi Valley sixty kilometres inside Georgian territory, where they settled. There were reports and allegations of Chechen fighters using the influx of refugees as cover to cross the border and use the Pankisi Valley as a place of rest and recuperation as well as a staging point for attacks on targets inside the Russian Federation. These allegations which caused further tensions in the already fragile bilateral relations between the Russian Federation and Georgia, prompted the Georgian Government to seek the assistance of the OSCE in order to prevent an escalation of the situation.

The OSCE Mission responded quickly to the request for assistance and deployed monitors to the segment of the border between Georgia and the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation. However, this deployment of border monitors only covered a small portion of the border where crossings could take place and in 1992 and 1993 respectively, monitors were deployed to cover the Ingushetian and Dagestan segments of the border. The Border Monitoring Operation (BMO) now consists of more than 140 monitors covering a 280-kilometer stretch of border between Georgia and the Russian Federation.

The presence of the OSCE Border Monitoring Operation (BMO) has enhanced the operational capacity of the Georgia Border Guards who have received a sizeable amount of technical support such as vehicles, protective clothing and uniforms from OSCE participating states.
The OSCE presence in the area has also facilitated the improvement of contact between the Border Guards of the Russian Federation and Georgia.

**Recycling and Destruction of Stockpiles of Ammunition and Bombs**

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the withdrawal of Russian troops from military bases in Georgia large stockpiles of ammunition, bombs and missiles remained on the bases. The size of the stockpiles still remaining on the bases has been calculated in terms of thousands of tons of all types of artillery ammunition, air to ground bombs and surface to air missiles. In addition to being an environmental and safety hazard, the stockpiles of ammunition and bombs pose a considerable threat to security in the region where a number of conflicts are ongoing within a few hundred kilometres of the bases.

At the 1999 OSCE Summit in Istanbul, Georgia and Russia signed a Declaration on the Withdrawal of Russian Forces and Equipment from Georgia.

Arising from the 1999 Istanbul Declaration, the OSCE instituted a voluntary fund to assist with the withdrawal of Russian Troops and Equipment from Georgia and to deal with its consequences.

The first project to be implemented by the Mission within the framework of the voluntary fund was completed in 2002 and it involved the conversion of 500 tons of Melange rocket fuel into fertilizer. The conversion of the rocket fuel eliminated a serious safety and environmental hazard posed by the Melange in Western Georgia.

In February 2003 the Mission commenced the implementation of an ammunition and bomb recycling and destruction programme aimed at eliminating all stockpiles of ammunition, bombs and missiles from Georgian territory. The Georgian Government designated the former military base at Dedoplistskaro as the Ammunition Recycling and Destruction Centre of Georgia for this purpose. As there were no facilities in Georgia capable of carrying out the complex task of ammunition dismantling, the project had to start with the renovation of a special workshop to carry out the various activities involved in ammunition dismantling. In addition the design, manufacture and installation of equipment necessary to carry out the various project activities was completed. The workshop now has the capacity to dismantle artillery ammunition, to recycle the recyclable components and to destroy the components that cannot be recycled. For example, the Centre is reprocessing nitro-glycerine gunpowder and converting it for industrial and commercial use. Other components of artillery ammunition are being recycled and converted for industrial use.

A demolition range for the destruction of dangerous and unstable ammunition and bombs was constructed on the former military airbase at Shiraki.

It is planned to install specialized equipment in the near future in order to give
the Centre the capacity to carry out one of the most important aspects of ammunition recycling, that is, the extraction of TNT from ammunition projectiles and bombs.

**Neutralization of Dangerous Chemicals**

The Mission is currently in the process of finalizing the details of a new project within the framework of the OSCE voluntary fund which will neutralize and destroy dangerous chemicals including napalm located at former military bases in Georgia. The project will also rehabilitate polluted lands of the bases where the dangerous chemicals are either buried or left lying in the open and exposed to the extremes of Georgian weather conditions.

**Human Dimension Activities**

The Human Dimension activities of the Mission are concerned with addressing long-term security priorities. The Mission is focusing on strengthening stability in Georgia by facilitating processes which enhance social inclusiveness and effective participation by the population in decision-making. The Mission also monitors the performance of the judiciary and the penitentiary system with regard to human rights. Through continued efforts to strengthen public confidence in pluralistic democratic development and its commitment to inclusive decision-making, the rule of law and protection of human rights, the Mission promotes an essential alternative to informal and unsustainable mechanisms undermining the ability of society to address the problems that continue to interfere with its efforts to resolve the conflicts that characterise Georgia.

**Conclusion**

In Georgia the Mission is implementing the most comprehensive security policy mandate that the OSCE can offer. Through its multifaceted and practical approach and strong involvement in both Georgian and regional security, the Mission is effectively making a considerable contribution to the regional security environment as well as easing the tensions in the Georgian-Russian bilateral relations.

With its focus on both short term and long term security priorities, the OSCE represents the longest-serving international apparatus of security and confidence building in the Caucasus.