

## IRAQ COMPACT ANNUAL REVIEW CONFERENCE

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**Stockholm, Sweden**

### **Remarks by H.E. Eka Tkeshelashvili**

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and an honor to address this distinguished audience, one whose members have proved so dedicated to building peace in Iraq and around the world.

I would like in particular to applaud the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, and his Special Advisor, Ibrahim Gambari, as well as the Prime Minister of Iraq, Mr. Nuri Al Maliki, for their efforts to make the Iraq Compact an innovative, indispensable tool for fostering multilateral engagement in Iraq's reconstruction and promoting national reconciliation.

And it is especially meaningful to me that I am making this address—my first to an international audience as Georgia's foreign minister—here in Sweden, which has been a true global champion of international cooperation and peaceful democratic development.

In our increasingly interdependent world, conflicts in seemingly remote places can spill over and create broader instability. The unspeakable carnage wrought by terrorists in Iraq is a clear warning of what the future might hold in the absence of concerted international action to promote peace.

Georgia is well aware that fostering stability by supporting democratic values requires lasting engagement. My country has backed this commitment with action, through our participation in international stabilization and anti-terrorist operations—including in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

We will continue and even increase our role in international peace operations, because we believe that we all must do our part to ensure our common security. This was the main reason behind my country's decision to increase our contribution to ISAF, deploying two companies this coming autumn. It is worth noting that our troops will not have any constraints while operating in Afghanistan.

In Iraq, meanwhile, Georgia strongly supported the stabilization efforts from the moment we joined the anti-terrorist coalition in 2003, assigning a Special Forces unit and a medical group to Baqubah. Our contingent steadily grew, reaching the size of a battalion in 2004 and that of a brigade in 2007. Today, Georgia is the second-largest per-capita contributor in Iraq, maintaining a 2,000-strong force.

Georgia's armed forces in Iraq undertake a wide variety of demanding tasks. Currently the Georgian brigade is assigned to provide security and combat illegal weapons smuggling in Al-Kut, in Wasit province. Its performance has been praised repeatedly, including by local Iraqis—to whom our forces have actively reached out.

Despite the tragic loss in early May of two Georgian servicemen, President Saakashvili recently underscored that Georgia will stay in Iraq "as long as needed" to help bring peace and stability.

Georgia's commitment to a secure Iraq is also motivated by the need to build on international experience in addressing ethnic and other interests through stability, progress, and democratic development.

Just as we do with Iraq, we must ask ourselves how democracy can be the glue for nations; how past experience and law can offer us examples for fostering real security for minorities; and how neighbors can become constructive contributors to stability and territorial integrity.

We have developed a body of legal and political examples to accommodate minority demands within the context of national sovereignty. Constitutions enshrine rights and mutual obligations. After all, this is one of the great achievements of the European Union. Its foundation is the belief that democracy and prosperity provide room for all.

What we are discussing here today has deep implications well beyond Iraq. Unresolved conflicts, aggressive separatism, and extremism can escalate into large-scale wars. Un-policed separatist territories also serve as safe havens for international terrorism and organized crime.

Our view in Georgia is that security and the respect of minorities can be achieved through the adoption of those universal values embodied in democracy and the rule of law. They can be further advanced by belonging to those associations of countries that have made these values their reason for existence.

This is why in March we launched a new peace initiative for Abkhazia that would offer the residents of this Georgian territory unprecedented autonomy, ironclad constitutional protections, and international guarantees.

Allow me to close by emphasizing once again that Georgia will remain an ardent supporter of the cause of peace—in Iraq, in our own neighborhood, and around the world. As the philosopher Spinoza once said: “Peace is not the absence of war; it is a virtue, a state of mind, a disposition for benevolence, confidence, and justice.”

In our region as in others, fostering this kind of profound peace demands the determined efforts of the entire international community.