1 ENERGY SECURITY AND UNRESOLVED CONFLICT IN THE CAUCASUS

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The Western world, and particularly the European states have long considered the South Caucasus and the Eastern shore of the Black Sea as a region historically, politically and psychologically separated from Europe. Only recent global political developments made it clear that this area is becoming an important security, political and economical component of a wider Europe.

Developments, which have been taking place since our elections which took place on November 2nd 2003, prove that the Georgian nation and state have irreversibly chosen the way of democratic development. People who had patiently endured economical problems, hardship and corruption, have expressed their protest at the very moment when democracy was endangered, national dignity was injured and basic constitutional rights to vote were being ignored. Within the November 2003 revolution the Georgian people defended the right to live in a democratic state. This right was defended peacefully through civil protest.

I am fully aware of what the international community has done to support fair and democratic elections in Georgia. It is deeply regrettable that these efforts were often ignored. However the Georgian nation rehabilitated itself through massive popular protest and now it deserves support as never before. We are most grateful for all the assistance given to preparing the presidential and parliamentary elections in my country, Georgia. Let me assure you that we are ready for cooperation across the board.

I believe that the victory of democracy in my country will open the way for the economic revival of Georgia. But we cannot do this alone – without the close cooperation of neighbours and partners around the world. The new Georgian administration, President-Elect Mr. Saakashvili and the Georgian...
people are determined to eliminate corruption, discriminative and contradictory laws and everything else that hinders normal development within the country and confidence-building among our partners.

In my presentation I'll try to touch some of the aspects of why, I believe, the South Caucasus region is to be considered an inseparable element of the Euro-Atlantic security framework and an integral part of the EU’s new Wider Europe-New Neighbours initiative.

Nation-building and the security situation within the Black Sea-Caspian Sea area, considered in a global context, will be determined to a large extent by the effects of three sets of interrelated and interdependent factors:

1. Continuing political, economic and strategic influences of the European and Euro-Atlantic institutions in the Eastern Black Sea, South Caucasus and Caspian Sea area.
2. The continuing fight against global terrorism and the proliferation of WMD.
3. Oil and natural gas energy policy of the region as well as influence from energy policy abroad.

I will elaborate on the influence of all three factors.

1. Let me touch on the issue of the region’s potential role in the larger international security community in the light of expanding security, civil, and economic demands of European and Euro-Atlantic institutions.

The most significant step in the evolution of the strategic identity of the South Caucasus region was the historic decision made at the Prague Summit.

Last November in Prague, NATO completed a 53 year effort to build a stable security system for Central and Northern Europe. We in Georgia long for our national security to be assured within such a system. The time has come for NATO to turn its attention to the security concerns of Southern and Eastern parts of Europe. Having reached this decision in Prague, NATO now embraces almost the whole Black Sea community either through direct membership or through special relationships of the kind enjoyed by Russia and Ukraine. This is truly a monumental shift in NATO’s sphere of influence.

I believe that the security framework of Eastern Europe in the future should be based on a "Three Seas Policy:" governing the Baltic, the Adriatic and the Black Sea. As I mentioned, the Baltic and Nordic democracies have by and large completed the construction of a durable Baltic security system. Major efforts are already underway to "export"