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Joint statement of the NATO-Georgia Commission at the level of Defence Ministers

05 Feb. 2015

We met today in the NATO-Georgia Commission (NGC) to discuss priorities for cooperation between Georgia and NATO and Georgia's security challenges.

We took stock of the implementation of the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package which was endorsed by Allied Heads of State and Government at the Wales Summit. The measures in this Package aim to strengthen Georgia's defence and interoperability capabilities with the Alliance, which will help Georgia advance in its preparations towards membership in the Alliance. We noted clear progress in implementing the Package, including setting up a NATO core team for Defence Capacity Building and making preparations for the NATO-Georgia Joint Training and Evaluation Centre and the Defence Institution Building School. Allies will continue to work with Georgia to implement all elements of the Package.

Allied Ministers recalled the Wales Summit decisions, in particular that Georgia has made significant progress since the Bucharest Summit and has come closer to NATO by implementing ambitious reforms and making good use of the NGC and the ANP; and that Georgia's relationship with the Alliance contains the tools necessary to continue moving Georgia forward towards eventual membership. NATO Ministers recalled the agreement of Heads of State and Government at the 2008 Bucharest Summit that Georgia will become a member of NATO, and reaffirmed all elements of that decision, as well as subsequent decisions.

NATO Ministers expressed strong appreciation for Georgia's sizeable contribution to NATO's operations and missions, including the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan to which Georgia is the second overall contributor. Together with Georgia's participation in the NATO Response Force and in EU-led operations, these contributions demonstrate Georgia's role as a contributor to our shared security in the Euro-Atlantic area and beyond. NATO Ministers expressed their gratitude to all the members of the Georgian Armed Forces who have

served in ISAF, and extended their deepest sympathies to the families of those Georgian soldiers who lost their lives or were injured on this mission.

Georgia, an aspirant country, participates in the Interoperability Platform to work with NATO to take forward dialogue and practical cooperation on interoperability issues as part of the Partnership Interoperability Initiative launched at the Wales Summit. As a partner that makes particularly significant contributions to NATO operations; with a high degree of interoperability; and participating in a wide range of other major NATO initiatives and activities, Georgia benefits from enhanced opportunities to further deepen political dialogue and practical cooperation within the Partnership Interoperability Initiative.

NATO Ministers welcomed the steady progress Georgia has shown in implementing its ANP, including defence reform. NATO Ministers noted the positive trends in Georgia's democratic development, and encouraged Georgia to continue implementation of reforms, including consolidating democratic institutions, taking forward judicial reforms, and ensuring full respect for the rule of law.

We condemn steps taken by Russia in Georgia which are in breach of Russia's international obligations and commitments, and contradict the principles of international law, in particular the recent signature of the 'agreement' with the Abkhazia region of Georgia. We note with concern preparations for the signature of a similar 'agreement' with the South Ossetia region of Georgia. Allied Ministers reaffirmed their strong support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders, which these 'agreements' aim to undermine. NATO Ministers also reaffirmed their continued policy of non-recognition, and reiterated their call on Russia to reverse its recognition of the South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions of Georgia as independent states and to withdraw its forces from Georgia. Allied Ministers welcomed Georgia's active and constructive participation in the Geneva talks and encouraged all participants to these negotiations to play a constructive role, as well as to continue working closely with the OSCE, UN and the EU to pursue peaceful conflict resolution on Georgia's territory.