GEORGIA

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Statement by

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Mister Chairman,

I would like to take the floor to provide few remarks on the regional disarmament and security from our national perspective. The militarization of our region is a major concern and threat not just to my country, but the entire region. The trend of increased militarization of the Black Sea region by the Russian Federation has not been reversed, despite its international commitments and calls from international community. To the contrary, it persists and in some respects has even accelerated its pace.

This Committee is aware, that for ten years now, the two occupied regions of Georgia are heavily militarized. While prior to 2008, the Russian military forces were present under the hat of the so called peacekeepers within the CIS mandate, now they are openly pursuing the policy of factual annexation of the two regions. The scale of the military build-up is a good indicator in this regard:

4500 military and 1300 FSB personnel illegally stationed in each of the regions, with sophisticated offensive weaponry and missile systems, anti-access/area denials capabilities and more, all having the wider range coverage across the whole Caucasus and large part of the Black Sea. Regular, wide-scale military drills aimed at power projection, provide additional source of threats and tensions in the region.

In this Chamber, the representative of the Russian Federation categorically denied that the Russian military build-up of offensive weaponry goes beyond the needs of respecting their territorial integrity. But what we observe are tanks, multiple launch rocket systems, SA and SS Missile systems, S-300 air defense missile systems and more. The power projection capabilities go far beyond the regional boundaries and the defense needs, as they ostensibly portray. If this assessment is inaccurate, as the Russian colleague argued, the best way to verify would be to allow
international monitors on the ground. This in fact is also the commitment the Russian Federation took under the 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement, which clearly calls for the access of international monitors to the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions. Russian Federation and it’s so called “border guards”, however, have been constantly denying the European Union Monitoring Mission to fully exercise their mandate and enter the regions for monitoring and verification purposes.

Mister Chair,

When it comes to the issues related to regional security, Georgia has been consistently committed to the principle of transparency. It is for this reason that we respond with even more transparency and accountability to all questions that arise, including to the most ludicrous allegations, such as those concerning the Tbilisi Richard Lugar Health Research Center. The laboratory is designed to promote public and animal health through infectious disease detection, epidemiological surveillance, and research for the benefits of Georgia, the region and the global community. The Center is functioning as an integral part of the Ministry of Internally Displaced persons from the Occupied Territories, Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia. On November 14-15, the Georgian side is hosting the international peer review exercise with the participation of experts from 20 countries, on the facilities of the laboratory in accordance with the transparency mechanism approved by the 7th review conference of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. The Russian experts were invited to participate in this exercise along with the other international experts although we received only denial for such participation. Despite the openness and transparency of the Georgian side, the representatives of the Russian Federation continue to spread disinformation on the functioning of the Lugar Center.

Regrettably, our empirical experience has shown that although absurd, Russian allegations had been not just a propaganda tool, but lately even part of hybrid warfare in terms of laying a political groundwork for future aggressive actions. Therefore, statements that Russia will not tolerate bio experiments along it’s border should be considered as direct threat to Georgia’s security.

Mister Chair,

In conclusion, let me note that the above observations reflect the trend not only in Georgia, but in nearby areas. I recall the wide-scale military buildup in the temporarily occupied Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, as well as the Sea of Azov which has grave regional security implications and clearly manifest that we are not talking about the isolated cases here but of the wider pattern of the Russian aggressive policy towards its neighbors.

I thank you