

## **Statement on the Meeting between the Georgian and Abkhaz Parties**

The parties note with satisfaction that the arrival in Tbilisi of the Abkhaz delegation headed by V. Ardzinba and its negotiations with the Georgian delegation headed by E. Shevardnadze, with the participation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Y. Primakov, will undoubtedly give positive impetus to the process of a peaceful settlement.

The participants in the meeting noted with satisfaction the role of the Russian Federation in the Georgian–Abkhaz settlement, as clearly manifested in the initiative by the president of the Russian Federation, B. N. Yeltsin, of 1 August 1997.

On the anniversary of the start of armed actions in Abkhazia, 14 August 1997, the representatives of the Georgian and Abkhaz parties declare their determination to put an end to the conflict that has divided them and restore relations of peace and mutual respect.

The parties are convinced that the time has come to embark on a course leading to peace and prosperity, and, with a sense of dignity and mutual tolerance, to act jointly in a spirit of compromise and reconciliation.

The parties have assumed an obligation not to resort to arms to resolve the differences that divide them and not under any circumstances to permit a renewal of bloodshed. Any differences of opinion will be resolved exclusively by peaceful political means, through negotiations and consultations both on a bilateral basis and with the assistance and facilitation of the Russian Federation, under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of representatives of the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

It was noted that it had been possible to reach agreement on a number of key problems of the settlement. At the same time, on certain issues substantial differences still remain.

The parties agreed on the need to maintain constant contact for the purpose of resolving the problems that gave rise to the conflict.

Tbilisi, 14 August 1997.

For the Georgian side: (Signed) E. Shevardnadze

For the Abkhaz side: (Signed) V. Ardzinba