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PRESS RELEASE

Extension by UN Security Council of the Mandate of the UN Observer Mission in Georgia

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The United Nations Security Council on March 31 unanimously adopted resolution 1666 extending the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) in the zone of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict until October 15, 2006.

It is important that the Council approved a detailed resolution covering all major aspects of the settlement of the conflict, which is to be sought solely by peaceful means. Tbilisi and Sukhumi are expected to adopt a package of documents on the nonuse of force and the return of refugees. The Council urged the Georgian side to address seriously legitimate Abkhaz security concerns, to avoid steps that could be seen as threatening and to refrain from militant rhetoric. The UN Security Council, recalling its support for the basic principles for the distribution of competencies between Tbilisi and Sukhumi, welcomed additional ideas that the sides would be willing to offer with a view to conducting creatively and constructively a political dialogue.

The document records the traditional role of the Russian Federation as a facilitator in resolving the conflict, as well as the necessity to make full use of all existing mechanisms, including the working groups set up in 2003 in line with the Sochi accords reached by the Russian and Georgian presidents with the participation of the Abkhaz side.

The Security Council noted the important stabilizing role of the United Nations Mission and the CIS Collective Peace Keeping Force (CIS CPKF) in the conflict zone, as well as the interrelationship of their mandates.

Against the backdrop of these provisions of the Council's resolution, the verbal attacks by Georgian authorities on the CIS CPKF strike a discordant note.

Expressing satisfaction with the adopted resolution of the UN Security Council, Moscow reaffirms that Russia in its capacity as a facilitator will continue its efforts for the purpose of promoting a comprehensive settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict.

April 3, 2006