

Press Release

The eighth dialogue workshop in an ongoing series on the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict and peace process took place in Bavaria, Germany from 22-27 July 2002.

The participants valued the opportunity for government officials, parliamentarians and representatives from civil society from across the conflict divide to: share perceptions of recent developments; analyse underlying challenges in the framework of the negotiation process; and explore different options in regard to status and the conditions that might satisfy the needs of the respective parties. In discussing the role that good will gestures and the building of confidence between the parties could play it was recognised that incremental measures to improve confidence require consistent patterns of behaviour if they are to lead to increased trust. Such steps can not be divorced from the political context in which they take place. In addition to the above the participants discussed the role of third parties and how they could relate to them in constructive ways.

One conclusion from the discussions was that notwithstanding the fear and mistrust that lingers as a result of the violent conflict that erupted between the parties nearly ten years ago, the parties can engage in constructive dialogue. The participants felt that it would be important for other people in the region to be aware that it is possible to have a thoughtful discussion about the contentious issues that would have to be dealt with in reaching any final agreement.

The participants in the seminar were Akaki Asatiani, Hamlet Chipashvili, Giorgi Kacharava, Tamaz Khubua, David Paichadze, Shalva Pichkhadze and Paata Zakareishvili from Georgia and Daur Arshba, Anna Keropyan, Ruslan Khashig, Stanislav Lakoba, Leonid Lakerbaia, Astamur Tania and Viacheslav Tsugba from Abkhazia. Everyone took part in their individual capacity, not representing any organisation or institution.

The workshop was organised by the Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management (Berlin) and Conciliation Resources (London), two international non-governmental organisations with experience in facilitating similar processes in the Caucasus and other regions of the world. The workshop was funded by the German Foreign Office (Berlin), the Development Service of the Protestant Church (Bonn) and the United Kingdom Department for International Development.

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