

October 20, 2009



**STATEMENT BY SOUTH OSSETIAN PRESIDENT
KOKOITY IN RESPONSE TO ASSISTANT DEFENSE SECRETARY
VERSHBOW'S MEETINGS IN TIBLISI AND SECRETARY CLINTON'S
REMARKS OF LAST WEEK**

“We appreciate the expressions of concern about peace in South Ossetia from U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Assistant Secretary of Defense Alexander Vershbow. We would welcome the opportunity to open a dialogue with the United States to explore those ideas. However, the U.S. Government continues a pointless exercise of making proposals for our future without any consultation whatsoever with the citizens of South Ossetia. Top U.S. officials can hold as many discussions as they like in Tbilisi and other world capitals, but no decisions about our future will happen without the consent of people of the Republic of South Ossetia.

If, in the future, international observers return to our region, their job should be to monitor Georgia, America's ally. After all, it was Georgia that violated international law by invading South Ossetia in August of 2008 as the recent EU report confirmed. That report also confirmed our contention that the international observers in place last year completely failed in their mission to stop Georgia's aggression. An honest assessment of the situation would recognize that Georgia, which continues to militarize with U.S. support, is the dangerous party here, not South Ossetia. If Secretary Clinton and other U.S. officials would engage us in serious dialogue, they would recognize that we are freedom loving people just like Americans. Continuing to ignore that fact may satisfy the United States' Georgian allies, but is not the best way to bring peace to our region.”

– Eduard Kokoity, President, The Republic of South Ossetia