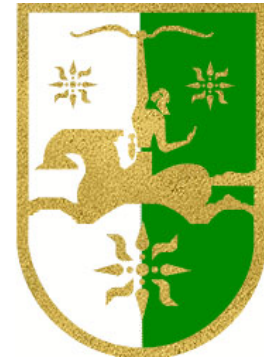


September 24, 2009



**Statement from Abkhaz President Sergei Bagapsh in
Advance of President Saakashvili's UNGA Speech**

President Saakashvili is one of the most dangerous leaders in the world. He has convinced his allies that he supports democracy, yet his own people know that he jails critics and crushes dissent. He speaks of peace, yet he triggers war. His brutal attack on the civilians of South Ossetia in 2008 and his refusal to take responsibility for the unnecessary deaths and widespread damage that resulted is a tragic reminder of his dangerous behavior. His recent confiscation of ships delivering peaceful goods to Abkhazia is yet another example of his reckless decision-making.

I understand the United Nations must provide a forum for world leaders, even those who have consistently displayed an inability to tell the truth. But for the U.N. to debate the future of the Abkhazian and Ossetian people without even hearing their voices is unconscionable and smacks of an era when colonial powers unilaterally determined the fate of smaller nations.

If the United Nations is serious about promoting peace in the Caucasus, then it will use its influence to persuade President Saakashvili to renounce violence against his neighbors and to participate in an honest dialogue about a peaceful way forward.

Abkhazians have welcomed back tens of thousands of refugees to the Gal region and have established policies to ensure their safe return and resettlement. We are moving forward to build our nation's future and secure our position as responsible and productive members of the international community.

-- Sergei Bagapsh, President, Republic of Abkhazia

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Contact: Saylor Company
626-794-8606

Steven Ellis
steven.ellis@saylorcompany.com