

# Deepening relations with Georgia

**R**elations between NATO and Georgia have deepened significantly over the years since dialogue and cooperation was first launched in the early 1990s. The “Rose Revolution” in 2003 and the push for democratic reforms were a strong catalyst for intensified partnership with the Alliance. Today, Georgia is an aspirant for NATO membership, actively contributes to NATO-led operations, and cooperates with the Allies and other partner countries in many other areas.

Georgia’s security policy is based on establishing a secure, democratic, and stable environment. To pursue this goal, it is establishing defence cooperation with partner countries and organisations. Cooperation with NATO, active participation in NATO’s Partnership for Peace programme, and eventual accession to the Alliance are central to this policy.

The Allies welcome Georgia’s ambition to join the Alliance and launched an Intensified Dialogue with the country about its membership aspirations in 2006. At the Bucharest Summit in April 2008, Allied leaders agreed that Georgia will become a member of NATO – a decision which Allied leaders reaffirmed at their summit meetings in Strasbourg/Kehl in April 2009, Lisbon in November 2010 and Chicago in May 2012.

As an alliance based on democratic values, NATO has high expectations of prospective new members and urges Georgia to continue to pursue wide-ranging reforms to achieve its goal of Euro-Atlantic integration. The Allies strongly encourage the Georgian government’s continued implementation of all necessary reforms, particularly democratic, electoral, media and judicial reforms, as well as defence and security sector reforms. Advice and active support for the country’s reform



Georgian Foreign Minister Maia Panjikidze (right) sits next to NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at a meeting of the NATO-Georgia Commission at NATO Headquarters on 5 December 2012. The Allies encouraged all parties in Georgia to keep up the momentum of the recent elections and to consolidate democratic progress. They also thanked Georgia for its substantial contribution to NATO’s mission in Afghanistan.

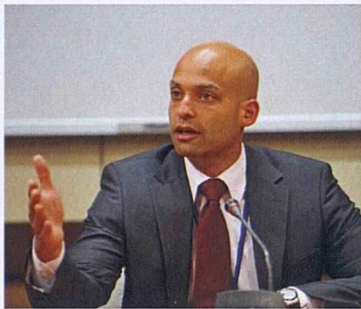


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## NATO's Special Representative to the Caucasus and Central Asia

The position of Special Representative to the Caucasus and Central Asia was established in June 2004 at the Istanbul Summit, when Allied leaders decided to make partnership with the Caucasus, as well as with Central Asia, a priority for the Alliance.



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His role is to maintain high-level working contact with regional leaders to enhance cooperation with the Alliance as well as to promote understanding of NATO and security issues through engagement with the media and civil society. He provides advice on the processes of reform and how best to use NATO partnership tools. He also liaises with representatives of the international community and other international organisations engaged in the two regions to ensure coordination of assistance programmes. His work is supported by two liaison officers, one for each region.

The post of Special Representative is currently held by James Appathurai, since 2010.

efforts are being channelled through the NATO-Georgia Commission, which was set up in September 2008, to supervise the process set in hand at the Bucharest Summit.

Beyond support for reform, an important area of cooperation is Georgia's support for NATO-led operations. It is commendable that Georgia is the largest non-NATO troop contributor to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. There are no "caveats" (or restrictions) on the use of these forces, which is greatly appreciated by commanders in the field. The Allies welcome this demonstration of Georgia's continued determination to play an active role in promoting international peace and security. Furthermore, Georgia has indicated its willingness to continue to support the development of the Afghan security forces, after the completion of ISAF's mission at the end of 2014, when responsibility for security will have been fully transferred to the Afghan authorities. Georgia also continues to serve as a transit country for ISAF supplies.

Georgia also cooperates with Allies and other partner countries in a wide range of other areas, ranging from countering terrorism and tackling new security challenges, to improving preparedness and responses to natural or man-made disasters.

## Multilateral dimension of partnership

Partnership with NATO has an important multilateral dimension. Georgia joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) in 1992, upon gaining independence with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The NACC was established after the end of the Cold War, as a forum for dialogue through which the Allies could reach out a hand of friendship to former adversaries which had been part of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact.

In 1997, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) was created to replace the NACC and to build on its achievements, paving the way for the development of an enhanced and more operational partnership, which also included western European partners.



As a member of the 50-nation EAPC, Georgia regularly exchanges views and pursues practical cooperation on a wide range of security issues with NATO member countries and other Euro-Atlantic partners. Thanks to the new partnerships policy adopted in Berlin in April 2011 – aimed at making NATO's dialogue and cooperation with partners more inclusive, flexible, meaningful and strategically oriented – Georgia will also have more opportunities to work and consult with partners beyond the Euro-Atlantic partnership framework, including NATO's partners on the southern Mediterranean rim and in the Gulf region, as well as partners across the globe.

The EAPC provides the overall political framework for NATO's cooperation with Euro-Atlantic partners and the bilateral relationships and practical cooperation developed between NATO and individual partner countries within the Partnership for Peace programme, which Georgia joined upon its launch in 1994.

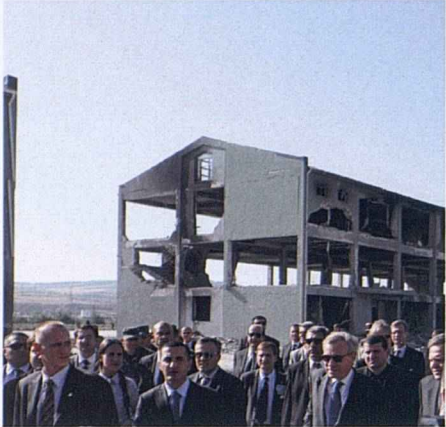
The Euro-Atlantic partnership is about more than practical cooperation – it is also about values. When partner countries join the Partnership for Peace (PfP), they sign the PfP Framework Document. In doing so, partners commit to the preservation of democratic societies; to the maintenance of international law; to fulfil in good faith the obligations of the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; to the Helsinki Final Act; and to the fulfilment of the commitments and obligations undertaken in international disarmament and arms control agreements. Notable principles to respect are to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state; to respect existing borders; and to settle disputes peacefully.

The purpose of these commitments and of the EAPC and the PfP programme as a whole is to build confidence and transparency, diminish threats to peace, and build stronger security relationships with the Allies and with other Euro-Atlantic partners.



Then Georgian Foreign Minister Alexander Chikvaidze signs the Partnership for Peace Framework Document on 23 March 1994. This paved the way for practical bilateral cooperation between NATO and Georgia, as well as setting out key partnership values and commitments.





The then NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer and Allied Ambassadors visit a camp in Gori on 16 September 2008, where some 2200 displaced people had found shelter after the August conflict.

## Security challenges in the South Caucasus

Georgia is situated in the South Caucasus and shares borders with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia – all three of which are NATO partners – as well as with Turkey, a NATO Ally. Stretching from the Black Sea in the west to the Caspian Sea in the east, the South Caucasus is a crossroads of peoples and cultures, which has been of considerable geostrategic importance throughout the ages and continues to be so today. It also offers a useful transit option for supplies to and from the NATO-led force in Afghanistan.

The Allies and their partners in the South Caucasus face the same security challenges, such as terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Such threats defy borders and can only be addressed effectively through international cooperation.

Energy security is an important security issue of shared concern. The South Caucasus sits on key oil and gas transit routes, and has significant oil and gas reserves. Energy-importing countries are looking to diversify their energy sources and supply routes, while energy-exporting and transit countries need to ensure the security of their industry and pipeline infrastructure.

The South Caucasus is also a region currently undergoing rapid and significant change. Such transition periods are always complex and a potential source of instability. However, by supporting this process through partnership and cooperation with its partners in the region, NATO aims to contribute to stability and in this way improve prospects for economic and social development.

The protracted conflicts in the region are a serious concern. In the case of Georgia, the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions have long been a source of tension, which erupted into armed conflict most recently in August 2008 (*see below*). NATO does not seek a direct role in the resolution of these conflicts, but supports the efforts of other international organisations, such as the European Union, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the United Nations, which have specific mandates for mediation. However, the peaceful resolution of conflicts is a core value of



NATO and is at the heart of the commitments undertaken by all NATO's Euro-Atlantic partners when they joined the Partnership for Peace. Upholding such values is all the more important in a region where tensions run high.

### Crisis in Georgia

Regrettably, conflict broke out in August 2008 between Georgia and Russia over South Ossetia and subsequently Abkhazia, with tragic consequences for local populations. The conflict, which erupted on 7 August, lasted five days before a cease-fire mediated by the European Union was agreed. It is estimated that about 850 people lost their lives and that more than 100 000 fled their homes.

The Allies called for a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict based on respect for Georgia's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. They deplored the use of force in the conflict, which was inconsistent with the commitments to the peaceful resolution of conflicts that both Georgia and Russia have made under the Partnership for Peace as well as other international agreements. Particular concern was expressed over Russia's disproportionate military action which was incompatible with its peacekeeping role in the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Russia was also called upon to take immediate action to withdraw its troops from the areas it had agreed to leave under the terms of the EU-brokered ceasefire.

The Allies agreed to support Georgia, upon its request, in a number of areas. These included assessing the damage to civilian infrastructure and the state of the Ministry of Defence and the armed forces; supporting the re-establishment of the air traffic system; and advising on cyber defence issues.

Underlining the Allies' continued commitment to the decision taken at the Bucharest Summit a few months earlier, the NATO-Georgia Commission was established in September 2008 to supervise the process aimed at realising Georgia's aspirations to join NATO. The new body was also tasked to oversee NATO's assistance to Georgia following the conflict.



The inaugural meeting of the NATO-Georgia Commission takes place in Tbilisi on 15 September 2008, during a visit to Georgia of the North Atlantic Council, NATO's highest political decision-making body.





NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen (left) talks to Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili on the way to their meeting at the Presidential Palace in Tbilisi on 6 September 2012. During the visit, the Secretary General said that Georgia's reforms are bringing the country closer to NATO.

The Georgian crisis had a significant impact on NATO's relations with Russia – formal meetings of the NATO-Russia Council and practical cooperation in some areas were suspended for over a year.

NATO continues to support Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty within its internationally recognised borders, and to call on Russia to reverse its decision to recognise the independence of the two breakaway regions. The Secretary General has issued statements underlining that NATO does not recognise elections that have since taken place in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and that the holding of such elections does not contribute to a peaceful and lasting settlement.

The Allies welcome the declaration by the Georgian president – recently endorsed by the Georgian Parliament in a unanimously adopted resolution on Georgia's foreign policy objectives – to seek a resolution to the crises with the South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions of Georgia through peaceful means. They strongly support Georgia's current strategy of engagement with the two breakaway regions, which envisions a constructive way forward through fostering economic ties and people-to-people contacts to build confidence. The Allies also welcome the steps Georgia has taken unilaterally towards Russia in recent years, including the removal of visa requirements for Russian citizens, the agreement on Russia's membership of the World Trade Organization; as well as the direct dialogue that has been initiated with the Russian government by the new Georgian government, which came into power in October 2012.

### **Framework for bilateral cooperation**

The NATO-Georgia Commission (NGC) provides a forum for consultation between the Allies and Georgia on the process of reforms in Georgia, NATO's assistance to that process and on regional security issues of common concern. All NATO member states and Georgia are represented in the NGC, which meets at the level of ambassadors and military representatives, as well as at the level of foreign and defence ministers, chiefs of staff and at summit level, as mutually agreed by NATO and Georgia.



Work under the NGC is developed through an Annual National Programme (ANP). These plans are based on the Georgian government's priorities and plans for reform, as well as recommendations from Allies. The ANP covers five key areas: political and economic issues, defence and military issues, resource issues, and security and legal issues. The first ANP was agreed in spring 2009, replacing and building upon the achievements of the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP), which had guided NATO-Georgia cooperation on reform since 2004.

An important element of support for Georgia's reform and transformation process in the defence and security sector is the Planning and Review Process (PARP). The PARP provides a framework for partners to develop effective, affordable and sustainable armed forces as well as promoting wider defence reform efforts. Planning targets are negotiated every two years and extensive reviews measure progress annually (*see p. 9*).

Cooperation with NATO goes well beyond support for reforms. The NGC also keeps under review cooperative activities developed in the framework of Georgia's participation in the Partnership for Peace (PfP), as well as in the military-to-military sphere. The PfP programme offers an extensive menu of activities from which partner countries can draw up programmes of cooperation according to the individual country's needs, abilities and ambitions. The activities on offer touch on virtually every field of NATO activity, including defence-related work, defence reform, defence policy and planning, civil-military relations, education and training, military-to-military cooperation and exercises, civil emergency planning and disaster-response, and cooperation on science and environmental issues.

A decision was taken in August 2010 to enhance NATO-Georgia relations through more effective military cooperation. The first Military Committee with Georgia Work Plan was developed and implemented in 2011. It details jointly agreed areas of cooperation and objectives, and defines priorities for the allocation of resources. A comprehensive set of activities aims to foster interoperability and to help sustain Georgia's contributions to NATO-led operations as well as to contribute



Newly elected Georgian Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili addresses the press during a visit to NATO Headquarters in November 2012, emphasising his government's commitment to achieve the goal to become a full-fledged member of NATO.





Georgian Chief of Defence Major General Irkali Dzneladze (centre) joins counterparts from other non-NATO countries that are contributing troops to the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, at a meeting at NATO Headquarters in January 2013.

to the implementation of defence reforms and the achievement of security and defence-related goals set out in the ANP.

To facilitate consultation and cooperation, Georgia established a permanent diplomatic mission to NATO Headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, in 1998. It is also represented at Allied Command Operations, which is based at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium.

The NATO Liaison Office, which was formally opened by the NATO Secretary General in the capital Tbilisi in October 2010, is also a valuable tool for assisting and supporting the reform process in Georgia and further developing bilateral cooperation.

In March 2012, Allies and Georgia agreed to enhance Georgia's connectivity with NATO, following up on a set of concrete measures discussed during the North Atlantic Council's visit to Georgia in November 2011. The aim is to support Georgia's reforms, strengthen the country's institutional capacity for membership and increase interoperability with the Alliance. These measures will also help make full use of the NATO-Georgia Commission and the Annual National Programme.

## Key areas of cooperation

In the early days of NATO-Georgia relations, partnership and cooperation focused on measures to promote transparency and build confidence. Over the years, cooperation has broadened and deepened. Key priorities today are: support for the wide-ranging reforms Georgia needs to pursue in order to realise its ambitions of Euro-Atlantic integration; tailored advice and assistance for defence and security sector reforms; improving the ability of the country's armed forces to work with those of the Allies and other partner countries in peace-support and crisis-management operations; and practical cooperation to address shared security challenges. Other important areas of cooperation are disaster-preparedness, science and the environment, and public information.



Under the NGC, political dialogue and the focus of cooperation on democratic, institutional and defence reforms has been strengthened. The ANP identifies key areas where Georgia needs to focus its reform efforts and where NATO-Georgia cooperation could be better targeted to facilitate progress. NATO officials provide feedback and tailored advice as needed.

Expectations of a prospective new NATO member include a functioning democratic political system based on a market economy; fair treatment of minority populations; a commitment to the peaceful resolution of disputes; the ability and willingness to make a military contribution to the Alliance and to achieve interoperability with other members' forces; and a commitment to democratic civil-military relations and institutional structures.

### **Defence and security sector reform**

Defence and security sector reform is an area in which NATO and individual Allies have considerable experience that partners can draw upon. NATO's newest members have themselves been through a democratic transition process and can also share their experience of preparing for Alliance membership.

Allied support for such reforms is not about imposing a "NATO model", but rather about encouraging Georgia to think about its own needs and the best way to go about addressing them. Advisors ask the questions that need asking and encourage ministries to think strategically and systematically.

Georgia's participation in the PfP Planning and Review Process (PARP) since 1999 has helped develop the ability of its forces to work with NATO and is also providing planning targets that are key to security reform objectives in several areas. A biennial process, the PARP is open to all partners on a voluntary basis, but participation is required of any country preparing for possible membership of the Alliance. The PARP helps identify, develop, and evaluate forces and capabilities which may be made available for NATO multinational training, exercises and operations. It also serves as the principal mechanism to guide and measure progress in defence and military reform.

## **Boosting the role of civilians**

A six-year professional development programme, launched in May 2009, is strengthening civilian management and oversight in Georgia's defence and security sector. Such capacity building is important for the country's democratic development and will improve the ability of the government to introduce and manage systemic changes in these institutions.

Four types of training are provided: educational opportunities abroad (provided by participating nations), such as language courses; internships, ranging from a week to several months, either at NATO Headquarters in Brussels or in the capitals of countries contributing to the programme; mobile training teams that provide courses in specific functional areas; and locally organised courses designed to provide training in more general fields. The programme also provides advice on policy development in the area of defence and security policy and is engaged in capacity-building efforts to support implementation of reforms.

In 2011, training was extended beyond the Ministry of Defence to include personnel from the wider security sector institutions, including the State Minister's Office for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, the National Security Council, the National Defence Academy, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Data Exchange Agency, and others. The programme's top priorities in 2013 are to support Georgia's civil service reform and enhance Georgia's own capacity for providing training to security sector civilian personnel.



## Clearing unexploded munitions

Decades of regional strife have left explosive remnants of war strewn across the Georgian countryside. The problem was exacerbated by the conflict with Russia in August 2008. Another source of mines and unexploded ordnance are contaminated areas around former Soviet military bases. Such dangerous materials are a danger to the lives and limbs of local people (some 400 victims have been severely injured to date), and could also be used by terrorists and criminals to make improvised explosive devices.

Three Trust Fund projects set up with the assistance of Allies and partner countries have helped address this problem. Thanks to the first two projects, 530 missiles were safely destroyed in 2006, followed by 1080 S-8 missiles, 5724 Alazan and 1976 Kristall rockets in 2009. A third Trust Fund project, launched in October 2010 and completed in early 2013, helped to build capacity in Georgia for the safe disposal of mines, shells, and other dangerous unexploded munitions. It also supported a special rehabilitation centre in the Gori military hospital by providing specialised equipment and training to help victims who have been injured by explosions.

A further Trust Fund project is envisaged to clear unexploded ordnance in Skra.

Through PARP, NATO support has helped Georgia build deployable units according to NATO standards and interoperable with Allied forces. Georgia's defence reform objectives within the PARP have facilitated improved financial management in the Ministry of Defence, assisted in reforming the intelligence structure of the armed forces and ensured that a credible Strategic Defence Review was conducted.

Georgia, like some other partners, has chosen to extend the scope of the PARP's coverage beyond the defence sector to cover reforms in the wider security sector. This means that goals set under PARP also address development objectives for the border and security services of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, including the coast guard.

Strengthening democratic and civilian control over the security and defence structures, and improving the capacity of these structures is of fundamental importance to Georgia's democratic development. Georgia's participation in the Partnership Action Plan on Defence Institution Building (PAP-DIB) reinforces these efforts, such as by promoting effective judicial oversight and appropriate defence command and control arrangements through a range of measurable objectives within the ANP.

Following a request for assistance from the Georgian Ministry of Defence, a NATO-Georgia Professional Development Programme was launched in May 2009 to help develop the professional skills of civilian personnel working in the ministry and other security institutions (see *box p.9*).

Another priority in the area of defence and security sector reform has been to support demilitarization projects in Georgia through the Partnership Trust Fund mechanism which allows individual Allies and partner countries to provide financial support to key projects on a voluntary basis. Over the years, a number of Trust Fund projects have helped to address problems posed by stockpiles of surplus and obsolete weapons and munitions, and promoted their safe disposal (see *box p. 10*).

### Security cooperation

Cooperation in peace-support operations and in tackling new security challenges is a significant focus of cooperation with Georgia.



Bilateral cooperation and multinational training and exercises help to develop the capacity of Georgia's forces to work alongside NATO forces. Georgia has hosted multinational PfP exercises in 2001, 2002 and 2007. Learning to speak a common language and developing interoperability in terms of standard procedures are essential. Thanks to such preparations within the PfP framework, personnel from Georgia have been deployed in support of various NATO-led operations.

As a part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, Georgia is currently providing two infantry battalions serving with US forces, an infantry company serving with the French contingent in Kabul, medical personnel to assist ISAF within the Lithuanian Provincial Reconstruction Team, and some individual staff officers. Following a substantial increase of its deployment to Afghanistan in 2012, Georgia currently has some 1500 troops deployed there, making it the largest non-NATO contributor to ISAF. Furthermore, Georgia is ready to continue to serve as a transit country for ISAF supplies.

Georgia has also indicated its willingness to participate in the post-2014 NATO-led mission to train, advise and assist the Afghan forces, which will be deployed once the transition to Afghan security lead has been completed and ISAF's operation is terminated. The Georgian government has also pledged financial support for the future development of the Afghan National Security Forces.

Georgian troops also worked alongside NATO troops in the peacekeeping operation in Kosovo from 1999 to 2008, providing a company-sized unit to the Kosovo Force (KFOR) as part of the German brigade there, and an infantry platoon within a Turkish battalion task force.

NATO seeks to ensure that non-NATO troop contributors to its operations are involved in political consultations and decision-making, in operational planning and in command arrangements. As a troop contributor, Georgia regularly participates in high-level meetings between Allies and non-NATO troop contributors, and its personnel have access to the briefing and planning facilities of the International Coordination Centre at Allied Command Operations.



A Georgian soldier observes an Afghan National Army soldier assemble an artillery tool at Camp Hero in Kandahar, Afghanistan, in July 2011.



A Georgian peacekeeping battalion on parade in September 2012, shortly before its departure for Afghanistan.





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A Georgian KFOR soldier stands guard at the Airfield Camp Prizren in Kosovo.

Security cooperation is not limited to contributing troops to operations. In the fight against terrorism, Georgia is supporting Operation Active Endeavour, NATO's counter-terrorist maritime surveillance operation in the Mediterranean, primarily through intelligence exchange. Cooperation under the Partnership Action Plan against Terrorism, which was launched in the wake of the September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, includes sharing intelligence, and training and exercises to improve counter-terrorist capabilities and border security as well as preparedness for managing the consequences of a possible terrorist attack.

Georgia is also working closely with NATO and other partners across a number of issues related to new security challenges, including cyber defence, energy security and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. The country regularly hosts conferences and seminars involving experts and officials from NATO and partner countries to share experience and best practice on how to address 21<sup>st</sup> century security challenges.

### **Disaster-preparedness and response**

Georgia is also working with Allies and partners to improve preparedness and responses in the case of natural or man-made disasters, which can be overwhelming even for the best prepared countries. The repercussions of these disasters often cross borders and so can threaten the security and stability of entire regions. This is why cooperation with regard to effective disaster-preparedness and response (referred to in NATO circles as "civil emergency planning") is essential and an integral part of partnership activities.

Georgia is enhancing its national civil emergency and disaster-management capabilities in cooperation with NATO and through participation in activities organised by the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC). The EADRCC was created in 1998 to coordinate disaster-relief efforts among NATO and partner countries. The Centre helped coordinate the delivery of hundreds of tonnes of relief items to Georgia in the wake of the August 2008 conflict. It also coordinated assistance to Georgia in 2005 when the country experienced some of the worst flooding in



its history, in 2006 when forest fires broke out in southern Georgia, and after a major earthquake in 2009.

Georgia regularly participates in exercises with NATO and partner countries, which provide a valuable opportunity to assess capabilities in action and identify areas for greater cooperation in future. Georgia itself hosted a major EADRCC consequence-management field exercise in the town of Rustavi in September 2012. Some 1000 people from 35 nations participated in the exercise, which was organised in cooperation with the Emergency Management Department of the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Most EADRCC activities, including a number of exercises, have been initiated, organised and conducted in partner countries, reflecting the high value that partners place on cooperation in civil emergency planning, which represents the largest non-military component of PfP activities.

### Science and environment

Scientists and researchers from Georgia benefit from opportunities offered under the NATO Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Programme, which promotes collaboration, networking and capacity building among scientists from NATO and partner countries. Activities supported include research, seminars, workshops and joint studies on security-related scientific issues and environmental concerns. NATO has two key priorities for scientific collaboration: defence against terrorism and countering other threats to security.

Georgia has been involved in NATO science activities since 1994. Many activities are aimed at aiding the country's reform and interoperability efforts, such as research and technology in air defence systems and data standardization, and reducing the environmental impact of military activities and munitions disposal. Other projects include collaboration on improving transboundary water quality and mitigating the risks posed by earthquakes in the South Caucasus (see box p. 14).

The SPS Programme also seeks to strengthen the scientific and academic communities in the South Caucasus countries. Georgia participated in the Virtual Silk Highway project, which has helped improve



A simulated train wreck is part of the scenario of a major consequence-management field exercise involving participants from Allied and partner countries, organised in Georgia in September 2012.



## Lessening the effects of earthquakes

The Caucasus is a highly seismically active and hazardous region. In the last few decades alone, several major earthquakes of magnitude 6.5 to 7 have shaken the region. A NATO-sponsored project is helping to build capacity and promote cross-border cooperation in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to help lessen the effects of earthquakes in the region and encourage unimpeded access of response teams in case of a strong earthquake.

In addition to the heavy toll in terms of human life, earthquakes can also destroy economic and social infrastructures. Mitigating the loss of life and destruction of property caused by earthquakes requires a clear understanding of the expected earthquake-shaking character at various locations, and building and strengthening of structures according to expected impact.

With this in mind, a three-year project was launched in May 2009, funded under the NATO Science for Peace and Security Programme, to improve seismic hazard and risk analysis and develop emergency response teams. Experts from eight NATO member and partner countries are involved in the project.

access to the internet for research facilities in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Afghanistan through a satellite-based network. Moreover, Networking Infrastructure Grants have assisted research institutions by providing equipment to improve the security level and quality of telecommunications facilities.

### Public information

It is important to explain the mutual benefits of partnership and what is required of a prospective NATO member to the Georgian people.

Work is ongoing to build networks with universities, non-governmental organisations, and the press and media, as well as to engage civil society in dialogue on wider Euro-Atlantic security issues. Numerous activities, such as seminars, conferences, workshops and publishing projects, are organised by local non-governmental organisations with the support of NATO and in cooperation with state authorities. "NATO Weeks" and summer schools are organised on an annual basis to reach out to youth audiences.

Groups of opinion leaders from Georgia are regularly invited to visit NATO Headquarters and the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) for briefings about the Alliance, and NATO officials frequently travel to Georgia to speak at public events. Senior NATO officials, including Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen and his Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia, James Appathurai, also regularly visit the country for high-level consultations. The North Atlantic Council, NATO's highest political decision-making body, paid a two-day visit to the country in September 2008 in the immediate aftermath of the Georgia crisis. The Council paid a second visit in November 2011 and another visit is planned for June 2013.

Georgia has established an Information Center on NATO, which has its main office in Tbilisi and branches in Kutaisi and Zugdidi. Working in close cooperation with NATO's Public Diplomacy Division and with the NATO Liaison Office in Georgia, it is an important tool in raising public awareness about the Alliance in the country.

Georgia's drive towards NATO membership continues to be widely supported in the country. A nationally representative sample poll taken



in March 2013 revealed that 73 per cent of Georgians approve of the government's stated goal of NATO membership (with an average 2.5 per cent margin of error). This echoes the results of the non-binding advisory referendum on whether to join NATO, which was held in Georgia in January 2008. According to the official results of Georgia's Central Election Commission, 77 per cent of voters were in favour, and 23 per cent voted against it.

One key public diplomacy objective for both the Georgian government and NATO is to inform, educate and manage the expectations of the population about NATO membership, including rights and obligations. Georgia is on the right track and has made significant progress on a wide-ranging reform package. It needs to continue on this path, adopting and implementing further necessary reforms, to realise its membership aspirations.



The NATO Secretary General and NATO Ambassadors meet the Chairman and members of the Georgian Parliament, during the visit of the North Atlantic Council to Georgia in November 2011.



- 1992** Georgia joins the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (now the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council).
- 1994** Georgia joins the Partnership for Peace (PfP).
- 1995** Georgia signs the PfP Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) - ratified by parliament in 1997.
- 1999** Georgia joins the PfP Planning and Review Process (PARP).  
Georgian peacekeepers deploy as part of the Kosovo Force (KFOR).
- 2002** Georgia declares its aspirations to NATO membership.
- 2003** Georgia supports the election security force of the NATO-led operation in Afghanistan.
- 2004** At Istanbul, Allied leaders make partnership with the Caucasus and Central Asia a priority.
- 2005** Georgia is the first country to agree an Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) with NATO.  
Georgia signs an agreement allowing supplies for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to be sent to Afghanistan through Georgian territory.  
Georgia opens an information centre on NATO.
- 2006** NATO offers an Intensified Dialogue to Georgia on its membership aspirations.
- 2008** At Bucharest, Allied leaders agree Georgia will become a member of NATO.  
The Allies call for a peaceful and lasting solution to the August armed conflict between Georgia and Russia in the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, based on respect for Georgia's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.  
The NATO-Georgia Commission (NGC) is established during a visit of the North Atlantic Council to Georgia in September.
- 2009** Georgia develops and implements its first Annual National Programme under the NGC.  
Launch of a NATO-Georgia Professional Development Programme for the civilian personnel of the Georgian Ministry of Defence and other security institutions.
- 2010** Georgia agrees to contribute to NATO's maritime counter-terrorist operation in the Mediterranean.  
The NATO Liaison Office in Tbilisi is inaugurated by NATO's Secretary General.
- 2011** The first annual Military Committee with Georgia Work Plan is established.  
The Supreme Allied Commander Europe visits Georgia in August.  
The North Atlantic Council visits Georgia in November.
- 2012** President Saakashvili visits NATO Headquarters in April.  
The Georgian President and Foreign Minister attend meetings involving partners at NATO's Summit in Chicago in May.  
NATO's Secretary General visits Georgia in September.  
Georgia deploys an additional battalion to ISAF in October, making it one of the largest non-NATO troop-contributing nations.
- 2013** The North Atlantic Council plans to visit Georgia in June.

For more in-depth information and videos on NATO's relations with Georgia  
go to the A-Z index at: [www.nato.int/a-z](http://www.nato.int/a-z)

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