

## **Brief Report: Georgian-Abkhaz Dialogue Workshop December 2006, Nicosia (Cyprus)**

This was the first dialogue workshop with Georgian and Abkhaz participants conducted by the Berghof Foundation since November 2005. Moreover, it is the first Georgian-Abkhaz dialogue workshop the Berghof Foundation organised in Cyprus a country that is shaped by ethno-political conflict. In this respect the overall workshop approach is characterised by the “conflict-prism method” which strives to encourage innovative discussions amongst the Georgian and Abkhaz participants “through the prism of Cyprus”.

Analysing the dynamics of the Cyprus conflict system and understanding overall developments that took place within Cyprus is seen as a first step towards a more nuanced discussion of dynamics within the Georgian-Abkhaz context. From the outside perspective Cyprus is easily perceived as a hopeless stalemate situation. However, analysing the current situation in Cyprus demonstrates how dynamic the situation is, containing many developments that can be seen as leading to a peaceful and fruitful solution.

With a total duration of five days the group concentrated for the first two-and-a half days of the workshop on the Cyprus issue meeting Cypriot from various political backgrounds. In the beginning the facilitation team gave an overview of the program also establishing the ground rules for the discussions with Cypriot speakers as well as for the discussions amongst Georgian and Abkhaz participants. Oliver Wolleh gave a presentation about the development of the Cyprus conflict since the 1960s putting focus particularly on the developments that lead to the referenda on the Annan Plan and the developments since then. Before their arrival participants had already received an introduction into the Cyprus situation in Russian language that was prepared by the Berghof Foundation.

Participants therefore were well prepared for the presentations and discussions with the Cypriot resource persons being familiar with all major historical stages of the conflict, major agreements that have been reached in the past, the role of the United Nations and later of the European Union management of the conflict as well as the positions of the two respective communities and differences between political parties. Since the status of harbours and airports are highly contested in the Cyprus context participants were also introduced into the names and locations.

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Cypriot speakers were politicians and Members of Parliament that are influential in their respective communities, academics, a lawyer, a journalist and a speaker from the business community. Organisers made sure that that major political forces within Parliaments both North and South of Cyprus were represented. The Number of Turkish- and Greek-Cypriot speakers was balanced and participants crossed several times between the Northern and Southern part of Nicosia both for appointments as well as social reasons.

In the remaining time participants discussed issues related to the Georgian-Abkhaz situation being “inspired” by the dynamics of the Cyprus setting. Participants worked both in mixed (Georgian-Abkhaz) as well as homogeneous (Georgian only / Abkhaz only) working groups. They were reflecting about in their views “positive” and “negative” aspects of the Annan Plan and interesting dynamics within the Cyprus peace process. Furthermore, they engaged in a speculative and hypothetical scenario anticipating Georgia’s accession to the EU in 2017 reflecting about the dynamics of possible confidence-building measures. Participants from both sides expressed the wish that confidence-building concepts needs to be further explored. Concepts are needed with tangible benefits for the cooperating partners. An improved relationship as the overall goal is not enough in this context and is considered as politically not sustainable.

The workshop was characterised by a constructive exchange. It is hoped that this will contribute to a culture of dialogue and understanding between the Georgian and Abkhaz communities.

The Abkhaz participants in the workshop were Batal Tabagua, Daur Kove, Manana Gurgulia, Said Gezerdava and Diana Kerselyan. The Georgian participants were Georgi Khaindrava, Paata Zakareishvili, Shalva Pichardze, Lasha Tughushi, and Vakhtang Kolbaia. All participants took part in their individual capacity, not representing any organisation or institution.

The workshop was organised by the Berghof Foundation for Peace Support (Berlin). It was facilitated by Oliver Wolleh (Berghof Foundation), Wolfram Zunzer (Berghof Foundation) and Maria Hadjipavlou (University of Cyprus). The Team was supported by Susanne Breda (Berghof Foundation) and Mehves Beyidoglu. The workshop was funded by the German Foreign Office.