

Whereas this “borderization” is inconsistent with Russia’s international commitments under the August 2008 ceasefire agreement, is contrary to Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, creates hardship and significant negative impacts for populations on both sides of these barriers, and is detrimental to long-term conflict resolution;

Whereas the peaceful transfer of power as the result of the October 2012 parliamentary elections in Georgia represents a major accomplishment toward the creation by the people of Georgia of a free society and full democracy;

Whereas the presidential election of October 2013 marks another step in this transition to a free and open democracy in Georgia;

Whereas international election observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) concluded that the election “was efficiently administered, transparent, and took place in an amicable and constructive environment [ . . . ]. Fundamental freedoms of expression, movement and assembly were respected, and candidates were able to campaign without restriction. [ . . . ] A wide range of views and information was made available to voters through the media, providing candidates with a platform to present their programmes and opinions freely”;

Whereas such election conduct is consistent with actions that demonstrate progress toward a mature and free democracy; and

Whereas, on November 29, 2013, Georgia initiated an Association Agreement with the European Union (EU), making Georgia a member of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, removing significant trade restrictions with the European Union, and signifying an important preliminary step towards the signing and eventual implementation of the Association Agreement by all European Union members states and Georgia: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved, That the Senate—*

(1) declares that the United States supports the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Georgia and the inviolability of its internationally recognized borders, and expresses concerns over the continued occupation of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia by the Russian Federation;

(2) encourages the President to enhance defense cooperation efforts with Georgia;

(3) supports the efforts of the Government of Georgia to protect its government, people, sovereignty, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders;

(4) reaffirms its support for Georgia’s NATO membership aspirations, congratulates the Government of Georgia on the steps it has taken to further its integration with NATO, and commends the determination of the Government of Georgia to maintain its troop contribution to International Security Assistance Force and its willingness to extend its mission in Afghanistan beyond 2014;

(5) congratulates the Government and people of Georgia on the presidential election of October 27, 2013, commends the Government and people of Georgia on a peaceful and democratic transfer of power, and encourages all parties to work together constructively to maintain continued movement toward a free and democratic society;

(6) strongly encourages the Government of Georgia to defend the rule of law, improve the independence of the judiciary, and protect the rights of political opposition – all essential components of a free and open democracy and which can and should be demonstrated in the upcoming 2014 local elections;

(7) strongly supports a United States and international election monitoring mission for this final phase of Georgia’s election cycle;

(8) further encourages the Government of Georgia to refrain from politically motivated arrests and prosecutions;

(9) affirms that the path to lasting stability in this region is through peaceful means and long-term diplomatic and political dialogue; and

(10) remains committed to assisting the people of Georgia in their efforts to establish an enduring democratic society with strong institutions within the rule of law.

SENATE RESOLUTION 318—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE REGARDING THE CRITICAL NEED FOR POLITICAL REFORM IN BANGLADESH, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. ENZI, and Mr. MURPHY) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 318

Whereas the nation of Bangladesh was established in 1971 after a bitter war in which it split from Pakistan, and for many of the ensuing years until 1990, it was ruled by military governments;

Whereas political tensions have at times turned to violence in Bangladesh, undermining the democratic process;

Whereas the last parliamentary elections in Bangladesh originally scheduled for January 2007, were postponed indefinitely after the military intervened amid rising violence and questions about the electoral process’s credibility;

Whereas a military-backed civilian caretaker government held power until December 2008 when Bangladeshis returned to the polls to elect a new parliament for the first time in many years;

Whereas ongoing antagonism between the country’s two ruling parties, the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, distracts from the important needs of the country;

Whereas concerns have grown about religious extremism in the otherwise usually tolerant country;

Whereas the United States-Bangladesh relationship is strong and involves many shared interests, including regional economic integration, counterterrorism, counter-piracy, poverty alleviation, food security, regional stability, and mitigation of natural disasters;

Whereas bilateral trade between the United States and Bangladesh now tops \$6,000,000,000 annually, with major United States companies making significant long-term investments in Bangladesh;

Whereas the economy of Bangladesh has grown six percent per year over the last two decades, despite a range of challenges;

Whereas the poverty rate in Bangladesh dropped from 40 percent to 31 percent between 2005 and 2010—a notable accomplishment in a country in which poverty has been deep and widespread;

Whereas the Grameen Bank’s revolutionary microfinance lending to the poor has helped reduce poverty not only in Bangladesh, but has served as an innovative and powerful model for helping the poor elsewhere in the world;

Whereas the Department of State, Congress, and other high profile international voices have recognized the Grameen Bank’s innovative work and expressed great concern over actions by the Government of Ban-

gladesh that undermine the Bank’s independence;

Whereas Bangladesh, an example of a moderate and diverse Muslim-majority democracy, is scheduled to have national elections on January 5, 2014;

Whereas, in 2013, hundreds of Bangladeshis died in violent clashes as a result of political violence and unrest, and some opposition and human rights activists have been arrested;

Whereas trials held by the International Crimes Tribunal in Bangladesh—set up to prosecute those responsible for atrocities committed during Bangladesh’s war of liberation with Pakistan in 1971—have fallen short of international standards;

Whereas the Government of Bangladesh eliminated a constitutional provision requiring the governing party to cede power to a neutral caretaker government three months before an election;

Whereas the 18-member opposition coalition in Bangladesh called for numerous nationwide strikes and transportation blockades in 2013, resulting in dozens of deaths;

Whereas Bangladeshi students cannot attend school and complete mandatory exams due to the strikes and blockades and related violence;

Whereas many citizens of Bangladesh have had their work and daily activities disrupted due to the strikes and related violence, which come at a cost to the economy and stability of Bangladesh;

Whereas a stable, moderate, secular, Muslim-majority democracy with the world’s seventh-largest population, and the world’s fourth-largest Muslim population, will have lasting positive impacts in the region and beyond;

Whereas the success of the democratic process in Bangladesh is of great importance to the United States and the world; and

Whereas during the week of December 8, 2013, United Nations Assistant Secretary General Oscar Fernandez-Taranco visited Bangladesh to foster political dialogue between Bangladeshi political parties and leaders in order to bring a halt to violence and allow for a credible peaceful election: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved, That the Senate—*

(1) condemns the political violence in Bangladesh and urges political leaders in that country to engage directly and substantively in a dialogue toward free, fair, and credible elections;

(2) expresses great concern about the continued political deadlock in Bangladesh that distracts from the country’s many important challenges;

(3) urges political leaders in Bangladesh to take immediate steps to rein in and to condemn the violence as well as to provide space for peaceful political protests;

(4) urges political leaders in Bangladesh to ensure the safety and access of observers in its upcoming elections;

(5) supports ongoing efforts by United Nations Assistant Secretary General Oscar Fernandez-Taranco to foster political dialogue between political factions in Bangladesh; and

(6) urges the Government of Bangladesh to ensure judicial independence, end harassment of human rights activists, and restore the independence of the Grameen Bank.

NOTICE OF HEARINGS

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I would like to announce for the information of the Senate and the public that a hearing has been scheduled before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural