



**PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE**

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE CO-CHAIRS
OF THE GENEVA INTERNATIONAL DISCUSSIONS
Delivered by Ambassador Anne-Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 11 November 2021

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Madame Chair,

Norway welcomes the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions to the Permanent Council and thanks them for their update.

We recognize the value of continued discussions in this format. We would, however, have liked to see more results from the discussions, leading to concrete progress for the people living in the affected areas of Georgian territory. We regret that Russian, Abkhaz and South Ossetian participants walked out of the last GID discussions when IDPs and refugees were items on the agenda.

We note, however, that the report talks of constructive co-operation between the GID participants related to covid-19, and discussions on possible joint efforts to address the post-pandemic needs of communities, and to mitigate the pandemic's impact on humanitarian and socio-economic situations.

We view as positive the continued utilisation of the Ergneti Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) meetings. We would like to see a resumption of regular Gali IPRM meetings as soon as possible. These de-escalating mechanisms are crucial, especially in situations of increased tensions.

While the Co-chairs report on some positive signs and developments, there are other signs that are deeply troubling, for instance the conduct of Russian Federal Duma elections in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and Russia's issuance of citizenship – a tactic that we also see employed by Russia in Eastern Ukraine.

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That Abkhazia recently closed border crossings during Georgian elections, so that Georgian citizens could not participate in these elections, is another troubling development.

We remain concerned about continuing “borderisation”. This policy aggravates the tense security situation and increases the hardship and suffering of the local population, which has already been hit hard by the pandemic.

The increasing tendency of closed “Administrative Border Lines” (ABL) crossing points further exacerbates a difficult humanitarian and human rights situation. Impediments, restrictions, or limitations on the right to freedom of movement across the administrative boundary lines must be removed, including and especially in cases of medical evacuation.

Norway calls for the release and safe return to their families of all those illegally detained along ABLs.

We also call for efficient and unimpeded access for international and regional human rights mechanisms, including those of the Council of Europe, to South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

We commend the Georgian authorities and the efforts of international humanitarian organisations in providing humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations.

Finally, let me reaffirm Norway’s unwavering support for the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. We once again urge Russia to fulfil its obligations under the ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 and its subsequent implementing measures of 8 September 2008.

Thank you