



## United States Mission to the OSCE

# Statement on the 51st Round of the Geneva International Discussions (Conflict in Georgia)

As delivered by Deputy Chief of Mission Courtney Austrian  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
December 17, 2020

The United States welcomes the successful effort to convene the 51st round of the Geneva International Discussions in Geneva on December 10 and 11.

During the talks, the United States took positive note of the opening of humanitarian corridors along the Abkhazia Administrative Boundary Line, which enabled access to life-saving benefits, medicines, and medical treatment among conflict-affected communities. The United States regrets that public health cooperation was not established earlier and along the South Ossetia Administrative Boundary Line, which would have saved more lives. The United States also expressed disappointment at the increased construction of fences and other barriers along both Administrative Boundary Lines despite the coronavirus pandemic, as well as over the ongoing detention of Georgian citizens by de facto authorities.

The United States welcomes Georgia's ongoing commitment to not use force to restore its territory, which followed the specific non-use of force commitments in the 2008 EU-mediated six-point ceasefire agreement. We call on Russia to commit to the non-use of force in Georgia, to support enhanced international security arrangements on the ground, and to reverse its recognition of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as "independent countries."

The United States expressed deep concern regarding the destabilizing effects of Russian military activities taking place on sovereign Georgian territory with active participation from de facto authorities in Russian-occupied South Ossetia and Abkhazia, as part of Russia's annual large-scale military exercise in the region.

We take positive note of the resumption of the Ergneti Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism as a sign of commitment to resolving disagreements through dialogue, and call for the resumption of the Gali Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism without preconditions.

The United States expressed concern over reports of a new "socio-economic program" between Russia and de facto authorities in Abkhazia, in particular measures that appear likely to promote Russian economic exploitation of the occupied region and advance incorporation of occupied Abkhazia into Russian governance structures.

The United States expressed its support and appreciation for the efforts of the Geneva International Discussions Co-Chairs to improve practical cooperation on issues relevant to the GID participants, including through organization of information sessions on topics of mutual interest.

Mr. Chair, the United States joined fourteen other delegations in expressing our full support for Georgia at the Ministerial Council by joining a Friends of Georgia statement, which called on Russia to fulfill its clear obligation under the 2008 EU-mediated ceasefire agreement to withdraw its forces to pre-conflict positions, as well as its commitments to facilitate international access to the Russian-occupied territories in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and to allow humanitarian organizations prompt access to all detainees.

The United States fully supports Georgia's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.