



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Special Forum for Security Co-operation N°812 Vienna, 23 February 2016**

---

#### **EU Statement in Reply to the Address of H.E. Tinatin Khidasheli, Minister of Defence of Georgia**

---

The European Union and its Member States welcome H.E. Minister Tinatin Khidasheli to the Forum for Security Co-operation and are grateful for her address.

The Defence Minister's visit takes place at a time when the entire OSCE community continues to be confronted with serious challenges and a very serious violation of international law as well as the basic OSCE principles and commitments caused by the Russian Federation's illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol and its destabilising actions in eastern Ukraine. The crisis in and around Ukraine has continued to demonstrate the OSCE's relevance for European security. The principles and commitments of the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris lay down the normative foundation of the European security order.

We reiterate our firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders and reiterate our concern about the continuing Russian military and security related presence and infrastructure reinforcements in the Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The European Union and its Member States call on Russia to fulfil its obligations under the ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 and its subsequent implementing measures of 8 September 2008, including providing EUMM access to the breakaway regions.

The European Union is a strong supporter of Georgia's political association and economic integration with the European Union which contributes to strengthening the regional security environment, as well as serving as a driving force for the implementation of fundamental reforms.

The EU-Georgia Association Agreement, signed in 2014, has raised EU-Georgia relationship to a new level. All Member States as well as Georgia have now completed the ratification process. This Agreement allows us to move ahead with deeper political association and economic integration, as well as to activate the full potential of EU-Georgian relations, focusing on support to core reforms, governance and sector cooperation. Tbilisi's continued commitment to reforms remains crucial, especially in the areas of the judiciary, rule of law, media freedom and human rights.

We are glad to note, that our dialogue and cooperation in the field of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) aiming at gradual convergence, including on the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), brought our positions closer on a number of issues, including security, conflict prevention and crisis management, regional stability, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. We are ready to step up our cooperation in the framework of the Eastern Partnership and European Neighbourhood Policy as well as through signing the Framework Participation and Security of Information Agreements. We are ready to explore also other areas of possible cooperation, such as cyber, counter-terrorism, anti-radicalisation, and security sector reform.

We would like also to express our appreciation for Georgia's contribution to EU CSDP missions in the Central African Republic, Mali and Ukraine, on the basis of our bilateral Framework Agreement.

We regard conflict resolution as a core task of the OSCE. Resolution of the protracted conflict in Georgia remains a priority for the European Union. The EUSR for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia as well as the EU Monitoring Mission are the visible and substantial signs of our commitment. We call on all parties to show the political will necessary to make progress in resolving this conflict in 2016 in line with OSCE principles and commitments, along with other protracted conflicts in the OSCE region.

We reiterate our view that the Geneva International Discussions, in their agreed format, continue to be the most important forum to address and resolve the challenges stemming from the conflict in Georgia. We welcome the continued

constructive cooperation in the Ergneti Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism and call for a prompt resumption of the activities of the much needed Gali Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism. Furthermore, we continue to believe that a clear non-use of force commitment by Russia is necessary.

At the same time, we are concerned about the continuing Russian military and security related presence, as well as infrastructure reinforcements in the Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russia's actions in pressing forward with the implementation of the so-called treaties signed with them, in particular in the security sector, clearly violate Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, principles of international law, and the international commitments taken by the Russian Federation, including the 12 August 2008 Agreement and its Implementing Measures of 8 September 2008, and have no legal standing.

We express our concern about the restrictions to the freedom of movement between the breakaway regions and the rest of Georgia. Continued deployment by the Russian Federation of so-called border signs, fences and other obstacles are in breach of international law and have a negative impact on the daily lives of the population, which is a source of tension. We call on Russia to reverse these moves.

We are deeply worried about the human rights situation in the Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Local NGOs and different communities within these regions continue to experience unacceptable pressure. Recent adoption of so-called laws on entry to and exit from the breakaway regions and on citizenship could have negative implications for the human rights, including freedom of movement, of ethnic Georgians living in the Gali region. Therefore, an objective and de-politicized assessment of the human rights situation remains essential with a view to improving living conditions for the conflict affected population.

We wish to underline that the issue of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, and their safe, dignified and voluntary return is at the core of the mandate of the Geneva International Discussions. We reiterate our commitment to help improve the situation of IDPs and refugees from the conflict and their unconditional right to a voluntary, safe and dignified return.

We remain convinced, that there is an urgent need for a meaningful cross-dimensional OSCE presence throughout Georgia, in particular for the benefit of the civilian population, including robust monitoring capacity able to operate unhindered across the Administrative Boundary Lines. We encourage the current German OSCE Chairmanship together with the CPC to continue exploring possibilities to re-establish a meaningful OSCE presence in Georgia, which would considerably strengthen the OSCE's engagement in the Geneva International Discussions and IPRMs, as well as in the implementation of CBMs.

Let me conclude by thanking the Minister of Defence once again for her presentation.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

\* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.