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STATEMENT

**As delivered by the delegation of Georgia on the 47th Round of the Geneva International Discussions
At the 1225th meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
Vienna, 11 April, 2019**

Mr. Chairperson,

Let me also inform the Permanent Council on the 47th round of GID round as well as provide the delegations with our assessment of the latest round, but first of all I would like to thank the Co-Chairs – Ambassadors Rudolf Michalka, from the OSCE Slovak Chairmanship, Toivo Klaar from EU and Cihan Sultanoğlu from UN, for their efforts and dedication to the process.

At the Discussion held on 2-3 April, the Georgian delegation expressed its concerns over the security and humanitarian problems of the conflict-affected population residing in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions, as well as in the adjacent territories of the occupation line. The delegation outlined the grave impact of illegal occupation and factual annexation process of Georgia's two indivisible regions by the Russian Federation. It was underscored, that the intensified militarisation of the occupied territories and constant military drills therein, destabilise the situation not only in Georgia, but in the entire region. The specific concerns were voiced in relation to the notorious practice of illegal detentions and kidnappings of local population by the Russian Security Services, as well as on the continuation of installation of barbwire fences and different artificial barriers along the occupation line. This results in further restriction of access of locals to their farm lands and escalation of tensions on the ground.

The necessity of execution of justice with regard to cases of murder of Davit Basharuli, Giga Otkhзорia and Archil Tatunashvili was once again brought into spotlight. At the same time, the Co-Chairs and participants from the US and Georgia expressed serious concern over illegal detention and death of Georgian citizen, Irakli Kvaratskhelia in unclear circumstances at Russian military base in occupied

Abkhazia region. We are still waiting from Russia the detailed information with the aim to determine the objective circumstances of death of the Georgian citizen.

Against this backdrop, the necessity of immediate restoration of Gali Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) without any precondition was underlined.

The Co-Chairs, and participants from the US and Georgia extensively talked about the grave humanitarian consequences of the closure of occupation line in both Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions at the beginning of the year. The participants from Georgia raised the issues related to the restriction of free movement, prohibition of education in native language, ethnic discrimination and violation of other fundamental rights of local population. In this context, the severe human rights situation of Georgian population residing in Gali and Akhagori districts, as well as their ethnic discrimination was stressed. The Georgian participants outlined the ongoing policy of Russification in the occupied territories, which aims at suppressing the identity of the local population.

The significant part of the negotiations was devoted to the necessity of implementation of the EU-mediated 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement by the Russian Federation. The Georgian participants stressed that the Russian Federation continues using force against the Georgian state through its illegal military presence in Georgia's occupied territories, which once again underlines the urgent need for affirmation and implementation of the non-use of force commitment by Moscow. To this end, the representatives of Georgia stressed the necessity of establishment of international security mechanisms in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions and the withdrawal of the Russian occupation forces from Georgia.

As noted, the information session was held on the topic of "non-use of force and corresponding implementation measures". Throughout the session, comprehensive discussion took place on the examples of international security mechanisms, which have been necessary for ensuring the cessation of fire and non-use of force in different conflict regions around the world.

Dear Colleagues,

Regrettably, the representatives of Russia and its occupation regimes once again demonstrated their destructive approach during the discussion of one of the core issues pertaining to the agenda, namely the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees, who have been forcibly expelled from Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions as a result of ethnic cleansing. In order to avoid meaningful discussion on this topic, the participants from Moscow, Sokhumi and Tskhinvali left the negotiations.

Geneva International Discussions were launched on the basis of the 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement. Discussions are held within the frames of two Working Groups, where participants are represented in their individual capacity. In the first Working Group talks are focused on security and stability in the occupied territories of Georgia, while in second Working Group – on humanitarian and human rights situation in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions, as well as on the issues related to safe and dignified return of IDPs and refugees to the places of their origin. The discussions are held with Co-Chairmanship of the EU, UN and OSCE, and participation of Georgia, the Russian Federation and the USA. The Head of the Provisional Administration of the former South Ossetian Autonomous District and the Chairman of the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, as well as the representatives of the Sokhumi and Tskhinvali occupation regimes also attend the Working Groups.