



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1225 Vienna, 11 April 2019

EU Statement on the 47th Round of the Geneva International Discussions

The European Union reiterates its strong support for the Geneva International Discussions (GID), the latest round of which took place on 2-3 April. The GID remain a unique mechanism, engaging all stakeholders in addressing the challenges stemming from the unresolved conflict in Georgia.

The European Union is actively engaged in conflict resolution efforts through the EU Special Representative and his co-chairmanship of the GID, and through the work of the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia. The EUMM remains the only international presence on the ground, which tirelessly keeps contributing to stabilization, normalization and confidence building between the conflict parties.

We note that the discussions at the 47th GID round allowed addressing a number of recent developments challenging the security situation on the ground. One of those important issues was the recent death of Georgian citizen Mr Kvaratskhelia in the custody of Russian Federation Border Guards in the Gali district. We are deeply concerned about this incident and call on the Russian Federation to ensure that there is swift investigation and full transparency on the circumstances of this tragic incident. Such incidents contradict the commitments made to work towards improved security and stability. We also reiterate our call for a thorough investigation into the fatal incidents of Mr. Tatumashvili in 2018, Mr. Otkhozoria in 2016 and Mr. Basharuli in 2014, which keep being surrounded by impunity. The

European Union reaffirms its readiness to further support investigations and to facilitate discussions, including through the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRMs).

Another challenging issue discussed was the recent unjustified restrictions and closures of crossing points in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The EU deplors such practice and reaffirms its firm position that freedom of movement is a basic human right which should always be upheld. On the restrictions and closures, we echo the statement made by the GID Co-Chairs stressing that both IPRMs and the hotlines should have been used. On the IPRMs more broadly, while welcoming the ongoing work in the Ergneti IPRM, we urge the resumption of the activities of the Gali IPRM without preconditions and further delay.

The European Union regrets that no tangible progress was made on the non-use of force issue. We encourage further efforts in this direction and continue to believe that a clear non-use of force statement by Russia is essential. We are concerned that Russia continues to violate Georgian sovereignty and territorial integrity through its military presence, infrastructure reinforcements, “borderization” and further build-up in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The European Union welcomes that the topic of women, peace and security was further discussed. We note the discussion on the humanitarian issues, including on the negative impact of the recent restrictions and closures of crossing points on the local population. We call for further efforts to address public health issues in a more informed and coordinated manner. The unresolved issues of documentation, affecting ethnic Georgians in the Gali district of Abkhazia, as well as pushing mother-tongue education out of Georgian schools require further efforts. We renew our call on the Russian Federation and the de facto authorities to reverse these negative trends. On a positive note, we welcome the developments in the area of missing persons.

We regret that once again the Russian, Abkhaz and South Ossetian participants walked out from the discussion under the key agenda item dedicated to the issue

of IDPs and refugees. We call upon all participants to constructively engage on all agenda items and refrain from walkouts which contradict the commitments to the GID made by the participants concerned.

The European Union remains convinced that there is an urgent need for a meaningful cross-dimensional OSCE presence throughout Georgia. We reiterate our firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. The European Union calls on Russia to fulfil its obligations under the ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 and its subsequent implementing measures of 8 September 2008. The European Union also calls for access for the EUMM to the whole territory of Georgia, including the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as per its mandate, as well as for human rights monitoring mechanisms, humanitarian and other civil society organizations.

The European Union looks forward to the next round of the Geneva International Discussions scheduled for 2-3 July 2019.

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

* North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.