



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No 1141 Vienna, 6 April 2017

EU statement on the 39th Round of the Geneva International Discussions

The European Union reiterates the view that the Geneva International Discussions continue to be a crucial forum to address and resolve the challenges stemming from the conflict in Georgia. We are pleased that the latest round allowed for active and productive exchanges on substantive issues of concern including the security and humanitarian situation on the ground.

We welcome the willingness of the participants to work further on a joint statement on non-use of force and encourage the participants to reach an agreement on a joint statement in due course. This should be complemented by new international mechanisms to improve security and transparency and confidence and security building measures on the ground. At the same time, we continue to believe that a clear non-use of force commitment by Russia is essential to enhance security, help build confidence and provide space for further political dialogue.

The issue of the intensification of Russian military exercises and further build-up in the breakaway regions were discussed during the 39th round in Geneva as well. The EU recalls its statement in the Permanent Council on 23 March, in which we clearly raised our concerns.

The European Union is deeply concerned about the closure of two crossing points along the Administrative Boundary Line of Georgia's breakaway region of Abkhazia which were used daily by hundreds of commuters. This further separates local communities on both sides of Enguri river and restricts the freedom of movement, particularly for vulnerable people, school children and those in need of medical support. It goes against commitments towards enhanced security and improved living conditions for the conflict-affected population. The European Union reiterates the need for full respect of the fundamental rights of the ethnic Georgian population

residing in the Gali district of the breakaway region of Abkhazia. Recent lack of clarity about residence and travel documents creates further confusion and uncertainty for thousands of people. We note that the fate of missing persons remained on the agenda as a major concern for participants and call for a further engagement on this issue.

We recall that addressing refugees and IDPs, including their safe, dignified and voluntary return, is a core task of the Geneva International Discussions. We therefore regret that participants from the breakaway regions of Georgia and from Russian Federation refused to engage on this agenda item. We call upon all participants to engage on all issues on the agenda, regardless of the views expressed in other international fora.

We welcome the willingness of the participants to cooperate on environmental issues and to further engage in solving the questions of ecological safety.

We welcome the continuing work of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRMs) in Ergneti and Gali. Fully functional IPRMs are essential for confidence, predictability and transparency on the ground.

The European Union reiterates its 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, and to grant EUMM access to the breakaway regions.

The European Union looks forward to the next round of the Geneva International Discussions scheduled for 20-21 June 2017.

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 NORWAY, 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.