



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1031 Vienna, 18 December 2014

EU Statement on the Geneva International Discussions

The European Union reiterates its strong support for the Geneva International Discussions, the latest round of which took place on 9-10 December. The EU continues to support the active participation of the OSCE in it, and believes that its extensive cross-dimensional experience and its contribution on the ground can be useful.

While differences remained on several of the agenda items and political developments in the region, the EU welcomes that all participants reconfirmed their commitment to the Geneva International Discussions, which remains the best forum to address and resolve the challenges stemming from the conflict in Georgia.

We welcome the relatively stable and calm situation on the ground with no major security incidents occurring since the previous round in October. However, the EU notes with deep concern the potential closure of a number of crossing points along the Abkhaz Administrative Boundary Line, further restrictions in the crossing regime in South Ossetia, and the continued deployment of fences and other obstacles at different locations along and beyond the ABLs. We are concerned about the impact of these steps on the freedom of movement and other basic rights of the local population and we call on the Russian Federation to reverse them. The EU also took note of the exchange of views on the future status of the ethnic Georgian population in both Akhalkalaki valley in South Ossetia and Gali region in Abkhazia.

We reiterate our call on all stakeholders to engage constructively in order to avoid further impact on the daily lives of people living in the areas concerned. We call on all participants to address these unacceptable developments within the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms, with the aim of finding appropriate solutions. We take note of the pragmatic cooperation in the context of the IPRM in Ergneti and

we strongly support the resumption of the effective functioning of the Gali IPRM meetings without preconditions.

We believe that the issue of non-use of force and international security arrangements continue to be core subject of the Geneva International Discussions. We welcome participants' agreement to continue working on the joint draft statement at the next round. In this context the EU calls on all participants to continue to work together towards sustainable security arrangements. We believe that a clear commitment by Russia on non-use of force is essential.

Referring to the discussions in Working Group II, the EU took note of the exchange of views on education and language issues in the breakaway regions. We commend the support expressed by the Georgian and Abkhaz participants towards practical steps in the field of cultural heritage. We also welcome that participants addressed the issue of missing persons: the EU believes that improving the situation of Internally Displaced Persons and refugees from the conflicts, including by promoting their right to return, is an important component of the Geneva International Discussions.

Mr Chairman,

The European Union takes this opportunity to express once again its concern on the so-called "Treaty on Alliance and Strategic Partnership" recently signed between the Russian Federation and the Georgian breakaway region of Abkhazia which violates Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, contradicts OSCE commitments, principles of international law and international commitments of the Russian Federation, including the ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 and its subsequent implementing measures of 8 September 2008. In this regard, we follow with great concern the military exercise carried out by the Russian Federation in South Ossetia on 5 December, as well as the developments around the so-called "Agreement on Alliance and Integration between the Russian Federation and the Republic of South Ossetia". The EU takes this opportunity to reiterate its firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders and reiterates its concern about the continuing Russian military and security related presence and infrastructure reinforcements in the Georgian breakaway regions of

Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The EU calls on Russia to fulfil its international obligations, including to providing access for humanitarian organisations to the breakaway regions. We also reiterate our call for unhindered EUMM access.

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 Swiss and incoming Serbian OSCE Chairmanships to continue exploring possibilities to return a meaningful OSCE presence to Georgia.

The European Union is looking forward to the next round of the Geneva International Discussion scheduled for 17-18 March 2015.

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 LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE and the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA align themselves with this statement.

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