



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

# **Response to the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions on the Conflict in Georgia**

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Harry Kamian  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
November 15, 2018

The United States warmly welcomes the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions on the Conflict in Georgia to the Permanent Council. We also congratulate you, Ambassador Michalka, and Ms. Cihan Sultanoğlu, on your appointments. We'd like to thank you for your substantive, detailed, and candid reports.

The task before you is not an easy one: to move this conflict towards resolution. Russia's military invasion and occupation of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia ten years ago contravened important principles that underpin our international order: namely sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the respect for non-intervention in states' internal affairs. In August, the United States joined many of Georgia's friends here at the OSCE in marking those 10 years, holding Russia accountable for its violation of international law and exposing Moscow's attempts to distort the truth and to rewrite history.

The United States urges the Russian Federation, as a party to the conflict, to withdraw its forces to pre-war positions per the 2008 ceasefire agreement and to reverse its recognition of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states.

The United States fully supports Georgia's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and we reject Russia's recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Mr. Chair, the United States is concerned about Russia's provocative actions that aim to extend its influence over the regions. Russia's installation of razor wire fences along the administrative boundary line (ABL) near Atotsi disrupts the lives of people living on both sides of the ABL. Russia should respect the rule of law by directing greater cooperation from the *de facto* authorities to conduct full and transparent investigations into the deaths of Georgian citizens Archil Tatunashvili and Giga Otkhozoria and bring the perpetrators to justice.

We encourage the participants traveling for talks in Geneva to focus their efforts on implementing the terms of the ceasefire and resolving the conflict. This includes establishing much-needed international security arrangements in Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions and ensuring the voluntary, safe, and dignified return of Internally Displaced Persons

(IDPs) and refugees. The United States deplores the breakdown in the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms, and we encourage the Co-Chairs to redouble their efforts to restart this key instrument before the next round of talks.

An OSCE field presence in Georgia capable of operating unhindered across the ABL would facilitate international access to the occupied territories and contribute to Georgia's peacebuilding efforts.

The United States believes that the Geneva International Discussions play an important role in enhancing security, stability, and respect for human rights throughout Georgian territory as well as resolving the 2008 conflict. The OSCE, the EU, and the UN each play an invaluable role monitoring the security situation, human rights, and humanitarian conditions in the conflict-affected regions. These organizations possess the expertise needed to tackle the challenges inherent in the Geneva process, and we welcome their fruitful cooperation.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.