



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1329 Vienna, 12 August 2021

EU Statement in reply to the Current Issue raised by Georgia

FINAL (787 words)

1. The European Union reaffirms its unwavering support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. We stand by Georgia, and by the Georgian people in their aspirations to live in a stable, peaceful, democratic and prosperous state.
2. This year marks the 13th anniversary of the conflict between Russia and Georgia, which unfortunately remains unresolved. The European Union expresses its firm commitment to a peaceful resolution of the conflict, in line with OSCE principles and commitments as well as fundamental norms of international law. However, this is only possible if there is strong political will on all sides to implement their respective commitments and to engage constructively in the existing negotiating formats. In this context, we wish to commend Georgia for demonstrating such a commitment on its side and we once again urge Russia to fulfil its obligations under the EU-mediated ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 and its subsequent implementing measures of 8 September 2008.
3. Regretfully, the Russian military presence in Georgia continues together with increased military exercises and infrastructure reinforcements as well as continuous illegal acts aimed at integrating the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia into Russia's regulatory and security space. This also

includes the most recent de facto annexation by Russia of the Georgian village of Aibgha. These steps run contrary to the principles of international law and commitments undertaken by Russia, including in the EU-mediated 2008 ceasefire agreement and its implementing measures, and must be reversed.

4. As the security situation on the ground, and in the wider region, remains tense, we welcome the fact that discussions during the last GID meeting focused particularly on core security issues, such as the non-use of force (NUF) and the international security arrangements. We encourage further efforts in this direction and continue to believe that a clear NUF statement by Russia is essential.
5. The ongoing violations of the freedom of movement, including through the actively pursued so-called “borderization” process, continue to severely impact the security, safety and well-being of the local population. In addition, socio-economic hardships, stemming from the COVID19 pandemic and the closure of Administrative Boundary Lines (ABL) for over a year, are contributing to the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the conflict-affected areas. In this regard, we note positively the efforts of the Georgian government to develop an inclusive approach, including the continued implementation of the Georgian strategy “A Step To A Better Future” and engagement with people in occupied territories. It is vital that civilians are ensured unhindered passage across both ABLs in particular to better address current public health concerns. We therefore welcome the fact that the crossing of people across the Inguri River has been restored to its pre-pandemic capacity since 5 July. This is a positive development allowing for a greater freedom of movement for the conflict-affected population.
6. We also welcome the result-oriented discussions by GID participants on how to improve human security in and around the conflict-affected areas. Sincere dialogue is needed in order to build trust and confidence and to significantly contribute to a future durable and sustainable solution of the conflict.
7. Another source of our concern is the detentions of Georgian citizens near the ABLs. While welcoming the release Mr Gakheladze on 14 July, we call for the release, without further delay, of all other illegally detained Georgian citizens, as

well as to conduct thorough investigations into the fatalities of the Georgian citizens Mr Tatunashvili, Mr Otkhozoria, Mr Kvaratskhelia, Mr Basharauli and others who died, while in arbitrary detention in Georgia's regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and to bring those responsible to justice.

8. The EU welcomes the continuous efforts undertaken at the Ergneti IPRM meetings in order to ease tensions and to facilitate dialogue on the ground. We also call for the immediate and unconditional resumption of the Gali IPRM, suspended for 3 years already, in accordance with the established practices and without any preconditions.
9. The European Union remains engaged and directly involved in stabilisation and conflict resolution efforts in Georgia, including through its continued engagement as a co-chair in the Geneva International Discussions (GID), its involvement in the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRMs) and the continued presence on the ground of the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM). We urge the Russian Federation to remove any obstacles to the work of the EUMM and to provide the EUMM access to the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as per its mandate, which covers the whole territory of Georgia.
10. The European Union also urges the Russian Federation to ensure the proper follow-up of the landmark judgement of 21 January 2021 of the ECHR in the case Georgia vs Russia.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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