



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council N° 1198 Vienna, 18 October 2018

EU Statement on 45th round of the Geneva International Discussions

The European Union reiterates its strong support to the Geneva International Discussions, the latest round of which took place on October 9-10. This special forum is marking its 10th anniversary and remains a unique mechanism, engaging all stakeholders in addressing the challenges stemming from the conflict in Georgia.

The European Union is actively engaged in conflict resolution efforts through the EU Special Representative and his co-chairmanship of the Geneva International Discussions as well as the work of the EU monitoring mission in Georgia. The EUMM, which is also marking its 10th anniversary this autumn, is of key importance, as it remains the only international presence on the ground, which keeps contributing to stabilisation, normalisation and confidence building between the conflict parties.

Fully functional Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRMs) in Ergneti and Gali, to which the EUMM together with the OSCE and UN makes an important contribution, are essential for confidence, predictability and transparency on the ground. In this context, we express our concerns about the current suspension of the Gali IPRM as well as the disruption of the last Ergneti meeting in September, and call on participants to resume the regular meetings without preconditions and further delay.

The European Union regrets that there was no progress on the non-use of force issue. We encourage further efforts towards this direction and

continue to believe that a clear non-use of force statement by the Russian Federation remains essential. Russia continues to violate Georgian sovereignty and territorial integrity through its military presence, infrastructure reinforcements and further build-up in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. We are deeply concerned about a worrying increase of Russian military exercises, including by recent intrusions of Russian helicopters. These continuing trends go counter to the commitment taken to work toward peace and stability and violate Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We regret that the discussions were held in an increasingly confrontational atmosphere. Regarding humanitarian issues, we reiterate our deep concern about the ongoing restrictions to freedom of movement, including the continuing "borderization" process, illegal detentions and the long-term negative impact of the closures of crossing points on the Abkhaz administrative boundary line. Further attempts to push mother-tongue education out of Georgian schools as well as existing documentation gap affecting ethnic Georgians in the Gali district of Abkhazia keep infringing the fundamental rights of local residents. We renew our call on the Russian Federation to reverse these trends and will continue closely monitoring developments in this regard.

The European Union reiterates its concern about the continuing impunity surrounding the fatal incidents of Georgian citizens Mr.s Tatumashvili, Othozoria and Basharuli. We call for a thorough investigation into these cases and all other cases, so for justice to be applied.

We regret that once again the Russian, Abkhaz and South Ossetian participants walked out from the discussion under the agenda item dedicated to the issue of IDPs and refugees. We stress that the issue of IDPs and refugees and their safe, dignified and voluntary return, continues to constitute a key agenda item in the Geneva International Discussions and so we call upon all participants to engage in this issue.

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 to the breakaway regions for EUMM, as per its mandate, as well as for human rights monitoring mechanisms, humanitarian and other civil society organizations.

The European Union looks forward to meet with the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions when they come to address the OSCE Permanent Council on 15 November 2018.

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, LIECHTENSTEIN 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.