



United States Mission to the OSCE

On the Closure of Crossing Points and the Illegitimate Referendum in Georgia's Regions

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Kate M. Byrnes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 9, 2017

The United States is deeply concerned by the decision of de facto Abkhaz authorities to close two controlled crossing points along the administrative boundary line of the occupied territory of Abkhazia in Georgia. These closures will further restrict freedom of movement and damage the livelihoods of local residents.

Actions such as these not only impose humanitarian hardships on the local population, they also erode the trust and confidence of the people and undermine the Geneva International Discussions, which are the recognized mechanism for discussing security-related issues and humanitarian needs of the conflict-affected population. The United States calls for these crossing points to be re-opened, allowing children to attend school and residents to move freely to engage in commerce, visit relatives, and obtain necessary medical services.

In this context, the United States again condemns the decision to conduct an illegitimate "referendum" in Georgia's South Ossetia region, planned for April 9. We will not recognize the results of an illegitimate referendum that is conducted in Georgian territory without the explicit consent of the Government of Georgia.

Furthermore, we call on the Russian Federation to fulfill all of its commitments under the 2008 ceasefire agreement, withdraw its forces to pre-conflict positions, reverse its recognition of the Georgian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states, and provide free access for humanitarian assistance to these regions.

The United States fully supports Georgia's territorial integrity, independence, and sovereignty within its internationally recognized borders.

Thank you, Mr. Chair

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