



EMBASSY OF GEORGIA TO THE REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA
PERMANENT MISSION OF GEORGIA TO THE OSCE AND OTHER
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN VIENNA

**Statement of the Delegation of Georgia in response to the OSCE High Commissioner on
National Minorities, Ambassador Knut Vollebaek,**

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 960
Vienna, July 11, 2013**

Mr. Chairman,

Let me join others in welcoming the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Ambassador Knut Vollebaek at the meeting of the Permanent Council today. On behalf of the Government of Georgia, I would like to reiterate our sincere appreciation of the close and fruitful cooperation between the HCNM and Georgia. We remain committed to further develop and enhance such cooperation. We fully realize the vital role which the OSCE institutions play in strengthening democracy and rule of law throughout the OSCE area. Therefore, Georgia will spare no efforts to contribute to maintaining and further strengthening the autonomy of the OSCE institutions.

Your Excellency,

We attach great importance to your personal active engagement and valuable contribution to the protection of minority rights throughout the OSCE area, as well as your efforts to protect the victims of ethnic and national discrimination and fight against human rights violations.

As regards to Georgia, I would like to stress that your active work and dedication has contributed a great deal to the improvement of the minority rights situation in my country. The multilingual education program carried out by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, with a very active cooperation and engagement of your office, has been a real success. Likewise, Georgia has undertaken significant steps to implement its international commitments in terms of repatriation of forcefully displaced persons.

Mr. Vollebaek,

As you are well aware, the human rights situation, and namely the rights of Georgian minorities residing in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia is of particular concern of Georgia.

We highly value your timely, unbiased and adequate reactions on ethnically-targeted violence, violation of security and property rights, hindrance of freedom of movement and residence, destruction of property, deprivation of ethnic Georgians of the right to education in their mother tongue.

Your latest visit to the villages of Didi Khurvaleti and Ditsi, situated near the Tskhinvali Region Administrative Boundary Line last month has been of crucial importance. We have made numerous appeals to the Russian authorities to immediately stop the process of installation of barbed wire fences. This process not only threatens the livelihoods of local population and deprives their fundamental rights, including the freedom of movement, but as you have rightly stated it, the process of installation of barbed wire fences has a clear potential to further aggravate the already tense situation on the ground.

In the end, I would like to once again thank Mr. Vollebaek for his outstanding work in the capacity of the OSCE HCNM, wish him the best of luck and all the success in his future endeavors.

Thank you.