



**OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2013
Warsaw, 23 September 2013**

Statement by Georgia

Working Session I: Tolerance and non-discrimination: National minorities

Thank you Mr. Moderator,

First of all, I would like to take this opportunity and congratulate Ms. Astrid Thors with the election as OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and wish her all the success in future endeavors.

Let me bring to your attention the very pertinent alarming situation in the occupied regions of Georgia. Severe and massive human rights violations continue to persist in these regions, and namely the rights of Georgian minorities residing in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia is of particular concern. Since January 2013, Russian occupation forces have intensified the process of the installation of barbwire fences along the occupation line in the Tskhinvali region. As a result of the intense installation of the barbed wires along the Tskhinvali occupation line, houses and yards of the local population have been divided and in some cases have been left behind the wire fence under the control of the Russian occupation forces. Such alarming developments compel the local residents to leave their permanent places of residence, thus, creating a new generation of internally displaced persons.

Since early June 2013, Russian occupation forces have been digging kilometers-long ditches and creating embankments along the occupation line in the Abkhazia region. The ditches reach 3-5 meters in width.

The Government of Georgia is highly disturbed by systematic ethnically-targeted human rights violations in the occupied regions, which include, but are not limited to kidnapping, armed attacks, forced conscription, prohibition of education in native language. Recently, the Russian Special Forces intruded into schools with Georgian-language classes and confiscated textbooks and computers.

Georgia is concerned about the increasing tendency of illegal detentions for alleged violation of crossing regulations in the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions. The freedom of

movement of local residents across the occupation line has been almost completely restricted. Severe restrictions extend even to the most vulnerable population seeking urgent medical assistance; as a result, several persons died en route to hospital after being refused passage through the occupation line.

Security and human rights situation in Georgia's occupied regions is of particular concern due to the lack of international presence on the ground. The EU Monitoring Mission – the only international mechanism operating in Georgia – is refused access to the occupied regions, as envisaged by its mandate.

It is our conviction that the Chairman-in-Office should empower the ODIHR and the HCNM to undertake a follow-up mission to the occupied regions of Georgia and report on the status of the implementation of the human rights recommendations of the ODIHR-HCNM 2008 Report.

The Government of Georgia urges the international organizations to duly assess Russia's illegal activities, and undertake appropriate measures in response to the deteriorating security and human rights situation, including, through activating human rights monitoring mechanisms.

Thank you for your attention.