



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

**S T A T E M E N T**

**as delivered by the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the  
OSCE H.E. Konstantin Zaldastanishvili in response to the address  
by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. António Guterres  
at the 984<sup>th</sup> session of the OSCE Permanent Council  
Vienna, February 20, 2014**

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I would like to join the previous speakers in warmly welcoming the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. António Guterres to the Permanent Council meeting and thank him for his comprehensive report. We highly value the constant and tireless efforts by UNHCR aimed at addressing a complex and multidimensional issue of displacement/refugees which remains as one of the most challenging humanitarian problems. Indeed, it is unacceptable that in the 21st century millions of persons are forcefully displaced and the forced displacement is still significantly growing.

The Government of Georgia is well aware of its responsibility and takes all appropriate measures in order to provide a durable solution to the problem of people affected by displacement, including refugees, stateless persons and asylum seekers residing on its territory, and is fully committed to guaranteeing their socio-economic rights.

Important steps have been already undertaken by the Georgian Authorities to ensure that the legislation and policies are in line with relevant

international standards to safeguard the rights of stateless persons, refugees and IDPs.

With significant international support, including that rendered by the UNHCR himself, the Government of Georgia carries out a consistent policy to ensure the integration of the displaced population into the Georgian society to maximum extent possible: Since 2009, up to 600 refugees have been granted with Georgian citizenship; A new well-equipped European standard Asylum Seekers Centre was opened in 2010; Healthcare services have been developed; Manifold educational projects have been implemented and the displaced children are being integrated into the regular Georgian education system.

The Government of Georgia is thankful to the UNHCR for its continuous support in elaborating better policies for the displaced population and overcoming the existing challenges that still need to be effectively addressed.

Dear Colleagues,

Unfortunately, the problem of forced displacement continues to be one of the most alarming and problematic issues for my country. As you are aware, in the beginning of the 1990s and as recent as 2008, Georgia suffered from ethnic cleansing, expulsion and human rights abuses of its population in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia regions, which are now under the occupation. Despite the concerted efforts of the international community and the Government of Georgia, hundreds of thousands of IDPs are still deprived of their internationally recognized right to safe and dignified return to the places of their original residence. Moreover, the number of the IDPs in Georgia is still rising due to the installation of barbwire fences and other artificial obstacles along the occupation line, which has significantly affected the livelihoods and fundamental freedoms of the local population and thus, has led to the humanitarian crisis on the ground.

Providing durable housing solution is the obligation of our state, but it is

done without prejudice to the right of displaced persons to safe and dignified return to the places of their original residence. The applicability of this right has been recognized among others by the numerous UNSC and UNGA resolutions on Georgia.

Mr. Chairman,

The problem of IDPs and refugees is very familiar to the OSCE area. Consequently, we believe that the OSCE should dedicate more attention to the issue of IDPs and Refugees and its security implications through taking the topic high on the agenda.

My delegation welcomes the joint work of the OSCE and UNCHR, named as protection check list which addresses the displacement and protection of displaced populations and affected communities along the conflict cycle. We hope that this joint endeavor will further develop and bring tangible deliverables.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize that Georgia strongly counts on the continuation of UNHCR support in its efforts to address the existing humanitarian problems. We reiterate our readiness to preserve our fruitful cooperation and seek new approaches in dealing with the issue in concern.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.