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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1024th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

6 November 2014

**In response to the report by the Co-Chairmen of the
Geneva International Discussions**

Mr. Chairperson,

We join in welcoming the Co-Chairmen of the Geneva International Discussions on stability and security in the Trans-Caucasus from the United Nations, the OSCE and the European Union. This international format of direct dialogue is undoubtedly useful. It makes it possible to remove concerns regarding the situation in the Trans-Caucasus and develop skills in seeking compromises and establishing respectful relations among neighbours.

Stability and security in the region can be ensured only by concluding legally binding bilateral agreements on the non-use of force between Georgia, on the one side, and Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

We note the contribution of the Co-Chairmen to the efforts to draft a joint declaration by all of the participants in the Geneva International Discussions on the non-use of force as a follow-up to the unilateral statements by Abkhazia, Georgia and South Ossetia. We regret that this work is being hampered by the unwillingness of the Georgian delegation to find solutions to key issues. Attempts to secure certain commitments from Russia regarding the non-use of force against Georgia or dust off the idea of so-called “international security measures” are nonsensical.

We think that it is to the credit of the Co-Chairmen that there was a professional and constructive exchange of views during the most recent, 29th round of the Geneva International Discussions. We note that in the working group on security the participants acknowledged the trend towards normalization of the situation in the border regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia with Georgia. We are, on the whole, satisfied with the levels of stability at the borders between the three republics. This year, serious incidents were avoided, including the use of weapons. Statistics confirm the absence of serious problems regarding the legal and regulated crossing of borders and the normalization of the lives of the local population – since the start of the year, over 800,000 people have crossed the Abkhaz segment of the border and more than 150,000 people the South Ossetian segment. It is clear

that the border fencing work has also had a positive impact in this respect. The local inhabitants now know exactly where the line separating the territories is and this definitely helps to reduce the number of border violations. In this context, we note once again the readiness declared by the representatives of South Ossetia and Abkhazia for contacts with Georgia on the demarcation and delimitation of borders. Tbilisi's consent to begin this work would help to solve the problems regarding unlawful border crossings.

We share the view of the participants in the Geneva meetings regarding the importance of the Joint Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) for the maintenance of stability in the region and the positive assessment of the work of the IPRM in Ergneti. We note that its meetings take place in a constructive and businesslike atmosphere. We trust that the work of the Gali IPRM will soon resume.

We support the endeavours of the working group on humanitarian issues. Unfortunately, the continuing attempts by Georgia to politicize the problem of refugees from the platform of the United Nations General Assembly has predictably led to its consideration in Geneva being postponed once again. The fact is that the Abkhazians and South Ossetians have no opportunity to explain their position in New York since the United States of America refuses to grant them entry visas. At the same time, there was constructive discussion in the working group on the fate of missing persons, proper preservation of cultural heritage and questions of freedom of movement. We trust that the call made by the Abkhazian representatives for Western countries to refrain from double standards in the issuance of entry visas to their citizens will at last be heeded.

In conclusion, I should like once again to thank Ambassadors Antti Turunen, Angelo Gnaedinger and Herbert Salber for their contribution to the work of the Geneva International Discussions, which continue to play a constructive role in strengthening security, stability and confidence in the Trans-Caucasus. The Russian Federation maintains its support for this unique platform for direct dialogue and co-operation, which is useful to everyone in resolving the situation regarding Abkhazia, Georgia and South Ossetia.

Thank you for your attention.