

PRESS COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE CO-CHAIRS OF GENEVA DISCUSSIONS

18.02.2009

The participants in the Geneva Discussions have just completed their fourth round. Once again, two working groups met in parallel to discuss security and stability in the region and humanitarian issues.

The Co-Chairs welcomed the UN Security Council resolution 1866 of 13 February, which extended the mandate of the UN mission and called for the intensification of our efforts here in Geneva.

In the 17-18 February 2009 Geneva discussions, participants have discussed and have agreed by consensus on Proposals for joint incident prevention and response Mechanisms.

The mechanisms envisaged are created in the interests of supporting peace, stability and security, and are required in order to prevent and, where necessary, respond to incidents that could cause suffering to civilian populations or risk deterioration of the situation.

The aim of the mechanisms is to ensure a timely and adequate response to the security situation, including incidents and their investigation, security of vital installations and infrastructure, responding to criminal activities, ensuring effective delivery of humanitarian aid, and any other issues which could affect stability and security, with a particular focus on incident prevention and response.

The mechanisms will allow for regular contacts between structures responsible for security and public order in areas of tension, and relevant international organisations. They will meet on a weekly basis, or more often as required. Inaugural sessions will be convened soon. As a follow-up to incidents, agreed joint visits may be conducted.

The agreed Proposals are an important step in helping to bring stability and security.

In Working Group 2, participants welcomed some positive developments on the ground, like the resumption of gas supplies to Tskhinvali, thanks to the efforts of the OSCE. The co-moderators tabled a proposal to overcome current difficulties in the delivery of humanitarian assistance to people in need in the region, by organising convoys simultaneously using both northern and southern routes. Unfortunately we have not yet reached acceptance of that proposal. Discussions on this will continue bilaterally between now and our next meeting.

Participants have agreed to focus their next efforts on issues related to the facilitation of voluntary, safe and dignified return of refugees, IDPs and other displaced persons. Security issues are very important in this context, which illustrates the interdependence of the two working groups.

These include in particular reconstruction of housing and infrastructure, social and economic rehabilitation in areas of return, property and housing rights, legal obstacles to durable returns (documentation, registration and identification requirements), and organisation of voluntary returns, including go-and-see visits.

The question of access to water will also be addressed.

The participants have agreed to meet again in Spring, on a date to be determined.