



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

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Statement of the Georgian Delegation

Working Session 10: Refugees and Displaced Persons

It goes without saying, that the increasing problem of internally displaced persons and refugees is an issue of major concern to all participating States. Currently, in the OSCE area, the IDPs and refugees number about 5 million. Situation is particularly alarming in conflicts where the fulfillment of basic human needs and protection of human rights are most at risk. This unfortunate reality raises multiple challenges to the OSCE participating States related to the protection of the rights of the IDPs and refugees and promotion of durable solutions.

The problem of IDPs and refugees is especially painful for Georgia. Georgia is a country that suffered the most from policies of ethnic cleansing, mass expulsion, and continued violations of human rights, particularly by ethnically driven violence. The Civil Registry Agency of Georgia records 450 000 internally displaced persons, victims of August 2008 Russia-Georgia war, and conflicts of early 1990s.

Measures undertaken by the Government of Georgia to ensure adequate living conditions for Internally Displaced Persons are comprehensive. Major policies carried out since 2008 include infrastructure, as well as effective social-welfare, work and livelihood initiatives. However, in this context, it needs to be stressed that the ultimate goal and main priority of the Government is to fully and unconditionally ensure the right of return of IDPs, contribute to the safe and dignified return of the IDPs and refugees to the places of their origin. This aim is equally shared and supported by International Community. The right of return of all internally displaced persons and refugees to their homes throughout Georgia is extensively recognized by international organizations: OSCE, UN, CoE and EU have committed to facilitate the voluntary return of IDPs in safety and dignity. Increasing support for the resolution tabled by Georgia during the UNGA sessions is vital as it reinforces one of the fundamental principles – the right to safe and dignified return for IDPs. Given its objectives, the resolution is of purely humanitarian nature. It is not directed against any party, neither does it aim to point fingers at those, who are responsible for ethnic cleansing and forced displacement. Let me underline the steps that should be undertaken in order to address the impediments created by Russia preventing return of IDPs to their former

places of residence:

First of all, international community should continue calling on Russia to respect international norms and principles and recognize the right of return of IDPs, victims of ethnic cleansing, in accordance to international law.

Secondly, we should start the process of creating conditions for the return of the IDPs and develop relevant timetable to ensure their voluntary, safe, dignified and unhindered return to their original places of residence.

Third, in this end, full, meaningful and reinforced participation of the OSCE in the Geneva Discussions is essential. OSCE should mandate the participants of the Geneva Discussions to focus their efforts in this direction and ensure return of IDPs.

Finally, we should address our common challenges that face the OSCE in dealing with forced displacement and its consequences. Return of IDP-related issues to the OSCE agenda represents a timely and adequate step forward; we welcome this development and highly appreciate the endeavors of the Lithuanian Chairmanship, the Chairperson of the Human Dimension Committee and the UNHCR for their extensive work. However, you all would agree that we still need to undertake concrete steps enabling us to mainstream the issue of IDPs and refugees in the work of the OSCE. In fact, the OSCE needs to strengthen its normative, as well as functional basis for dealing effectively and successfully with displacement.

First, we consider that the OSCE should adopt the Ministerial Decision, which would gather, systematize and modernize already existing commitments, serve as the relevant guideline for the work of the OSCE.

Second, the OSCE should dedicate more structured institutional attention to the link between displacement and the conflict cycle. In this end, it is vital to create a focal point within the Conflict Prevention Center (CPC), which would coordinate a concerted effort of all participating States aimed at finding solutions to existing problems, continuing to endanger stability in the OSCE region.

Third, we deem important to systematically prepare reports and address specific conflict situations with a particular emphasis on forcefully displaced persons. We believe that the reports shall contain concrete and efficient recommendations aimed at strengthening protection of the rights of IDPs and refugees, and providing assistance to them.

We believe that these initiatives will lay a coherent and comprehensive basis to the OSCE commitments, and provide the OSCE with special tools enabling us to protect the right of the IDPs and ensure their fundamental rights.

Thank you.