



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE CO-CHAIRS OF THE GENEVA
INTERNATIONAL DISCUSSIONS**

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile
to the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 22 October 2015

Madam Chair,

I aligned myself with the statement made by Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union. Let me add a few remarks in my national capacity.

Madam Chair,

We welcome the Co-chairs of the Geneva International Discussions to the Permanent Council. We support their efforts and hope for further progress in future discussions.

Madam Chair,

Norway's Foreign Minister Børge Brende visited Georgia last month, where he had fruitful discussions with Georgia's President, Prime Minister and Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence. Minister Brende also visited the barrier separating the breakaway region of South Ossetia from the rest of Georgia. Across the barbed-wire fence, he talked to a Georgian farmer who one morning found himself involuntarily displaced from his fields on the other side of the barrier, which had been moved overnight. His story was a stark illustration not only of the plight of the local population, but also of the absurdity of the situation.

Minister Brende expressed his grave concern for the humanitarian situation in the breakaway regions. We again call on the *de facto* authorities and Russia to ensure that humanitarian organisations and other international representatives are granted unrestricted access to the areas.

In connection with the visit, Foreign Minister Brende stated that «the conflict in Georgia must not be forgotten. We cannot in the 21st century accept attempts to enforce so-called “spheres of influence”. This is as unacceptable in Georgia as it is in Ukraine».

Madam Chair,

We reiterate our support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We urge Russia to comply with the ceasefire agreement of August 2008 and its subsequent implementing measures.

We regret steps taken by Russia that are making the situation harder to resolve and therefore run counter to the spirit of the Geneva International Discussions. The so-called "treaties" with the *de facto* authorities of the breakaway regions from November 2014 and March 2015 are clear violations of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and have no legal standing. The moving of signposts along the Administrative Boundary Line with South Ossetia this July was an additional provocation.

Madam Chair,

We call on Russia to revoke its recognition of the Georgian breakaway regions as independent states, to withdraw its military forces from Georgia, and to engage constructively in resolving the conflict.

Thank you, Madam Chair.