



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

**Statement as delivered by the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the OSCE H.E.  
Konstantin Zaldastanishvili in response to the address by the Commissioner for Human  
Rights of the Council of Europe,  
Mr. Nils Muižnieks  
at the 985<sup>th</sup> meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council  
Vienna, February 27, 2014**

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to join previous speakers in welcoming the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Mr. Nils Muižnieks at the Permanent Council and thank him for his informative presentation. We appreciate the cooperation between the OSCE and Council of Europe, based on the common values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Just last month, in January this year, Commissioner Muižnieks paid his first visit to Georgia, in the frames of which he held meetings with the government officials, members of the parliament and non-governmental organizations. It was an opportunity to examine the course of the ongoing reforms in Georgia with a special focus on justice, minority rights and penitentiary. We look forward to the follow-up report in the coming months.

Georgia has enhanced its reform agenda by addressing several issues where improvement was needed. Concrete steps have been taken to adopt a National Human Rights Action Plan and to increase transparency and accountability in other areas. We also acknowledge the fact that reforms should be intensified and remaining challenges resolved.

At the same time, we regret that the Commissioner's recent visit did not include a study trip to the occupation line where persistent human rights violations continue on a daily basis. People are being deprived of the very basic human rights and fundamental freedoms. Just recently the Russian occupation forces resumed the illegal process of erection of barbed-wire fences along the occupation line in the Tskhinvali region, in particular the vicinity of Ghogheti and Atotsi villages in the Kareli district. The installation of barb-wires and other artificial obstacles is in breach of universal principles of the International law and creates additional impediments for the local population to freely exercise their rights.

In this view, we hope that during the next visit of the CoE Commissioner for Human Rights to Georgia he will use the opportunity to verify the situation on the ground across the occupation line. Commissioner's personal engagement will send a strong message of support to the population living in the war affected areas.

In conclusion we once again thank Commissioner Muižnieks and wish him all the best in his future activities.

Thank you.