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EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1174
Vienna, 1 February 2018**

EU Statement on recent developments in Georgia

The European Union is deeply concerned by further steps taken by the Russian Federation to include Georgian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia into its regulatory and security space. These steps run contrary to the principles of international law, and Russia's international commitments, including the 12 August 2008 agreement and its implementing measures of 8 September 2008.

We condemn the recent ratification by Russia's State Duma of an agreement with the de facto leaders in Tskhinvali regarding the incorporation of a number of de facto South Ossetian military units or personnel into the Russian Armed Forces.

This so-called agreement, like previous steps taken by the Russian Federation and Georgia's breakaway regions clearly violates Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and we do not recognize it.

In this context, the European Union condemns the opening of a so called customs point in the Georgian breakaway region of South Ossetia and similar creation of a customs point in the region of Abkhazia. In our 21 December statement, we raised concerns about plans to organize the Georgian breakaway regions into constituencies for Russian Federal elections and we note with concern the intentions to open polling stations in the breakaway regions for the upcoming Russian presidential elections.

All above mentioned illegal acts undermine conflict resolution efforts. The EU is closely monitoring developments in this regard and we call for these illegal acts to be reversed. The Geneva International Discussions provide a forum where these issues can be addressed.

The European Union reaffirms its commitment to a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Georgia in line with OSCE principles and commitments, including through its co-chairmanship of the Geneva International Discussions and through the EU Monitoring Mission. We remain convinced that there is an urgent need for a meaningful cross-dimensional OSCE presence throughout Georgia, in particular for the benefit of the civilian population, including robust monitoring capacity able to operate unhindered across the administrative boundary lines.

We also reiterate our firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. The European Union calls on Russia to fulfil its obligations under the 12 August 2008 agreement and its subsequent implementing measures of 8 September 2008. The European Union also calls for access to the breakaway regions for the EUMM, as per its mandate, as well as for humanitarian organizations.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.