



**Statement as delivered by the delegation of Georgia at the
2015 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**

Working Session 11, Refugees and IDPs

Warsaw, September 28, 2015

- Thank you Madame Moderator.
- While Georgia aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the EU and its member states, I would like to make the following statement in my national capacity.
- The plight of internal displacement in Georgia dates back to the early 1990s, when hundreds of thousands of Georgian citizens of various ethnicities were forced to leave their homes as a painful consequence of the armed hostilities in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions. These armed hostilities were the result of Russia's direct military and economic support to both separatist regimes. The situation of IDPs in Georgia has further deteriorated after the August 2008 Russia-Georgia War, which resulted in a new wave of tens of thousands of IDPs, mostly from occupied Tskhinvali region of Georgia.
- In order to ease the difficult situation of IDPs, Georgia continues the implementation of the State strategy on internally displaced persons (IDPs) and its updated Action Plan, as well as the new law on "Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories of Georgia". Their implementation have brought significant improvements in terms of providing appropriate living conditions to IDPs, providing financial assistance, ensuring proper procedures for registration and timely granting of an IDP status to every affected person, family reunion, property restitution, providing appropriate healthcare, education and employment in a non-discriminatory manner. Moreover, with the help of international community, the efforts undertaken by Georgia include construction of housing, including corresponding facilities for many, though not yet for every displaced person.
- It should be noted that the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights of the Internally Displaced Persons visited Georgia recently and in its report acknowledged Government's progress in the search for solutions for all internally displaced persons in Georgia.
- Despite Georgia's commitment to ensuring decent living conditions for all Internally Displaced Persons and refugees, it should stressed that the only durable solution for them is a voluntary, safe and dignified return to the places of their origin. According to the 2015

UNHCR Intentions survey conducted among IDPs, 88% of them expressed willingness to return to the places of their origin in a safe and dignified manner.

- Yet, despite the direct calls of the UN Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, the IDPs and refugees continue to be deprived of their internationally recognized right to return. Moreover, the fundamental rights of return of IDPs and refugees are rejected by Russian participants within the second working group on humanitarian issues of the Geneva International Discussions.
- Protection of human rights in the occupied regions of Georgia remains a challenge not only for the government of Georgia but also for the international community. For years, the Georgian authorities have been trying to involve international organizations in order to ensure protection of human rights in the occupied regions of Georgia. It is deplorable that the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in Georgia is not allowed to carry out its mandate in the occupied regions of Georgia. As the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights stated after visiting the occupation line and witnessing the situation on the ground, the occupied regions of Georgia have turned into “black holes” Tskhinvali region has become “one of the most inaccessible places on Earth”.
- Thus, local residents in the occupied regions continue to be denied their universal right to free movement. They continue to be detained and harassed for crossing the occupation line. Ethnic Georgians living on the other side of the occupation line are deprived of the right to education in native language. The occupation regime has not been allowing schoolchildren of Georgian ethnicity from the Gali district to cross the occupation line to attend classes on the Government controlled territory, thus coercing them to attend the Russian-language school.
- Continuous human rights violations, installation of barbed wire fences and other artificial obstacles along occupation line has further affected the humanitarian and human rights situation of the local population, including those of internally displaced persons (IDPs).
- We call upon the Russian Federation as well as its occupation regimes to halt the violation of human rights and the discriminatory treatment of ethnic Georgians in the occupied regions, as they have the potential to cause a new wave of IDPs.
- Against this backdrop and despite all the challenges, with the help and support of international community, Georgia is determined to continue to seek ways to address the problem of internal displacement and to achieve safe and dignified return of IDPs to the places of their origin.