



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

Statement on the 55th round of the Geneva International Discussions

As for delivery by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1349-th meeting of the Permanent Council,
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Madame Chairperson,

It is important that throughout 2021 the four respective rounds of negotiations in the framework of the Geneva International Discussions provided the sides of the Russian-Georgian conflict with a possibility to address a wide range of security and humanitarian conflict-related issues.

In this regard, Ukraine praises the efforts by the Co-Chairs of the GID, that remains a key international mechanism for finding solution to this conflict as well as for solving the problems of conflict affected population on the ground. One month ago, we had a good opportunity to discuss these issues in detail as the Co-Chairs personally addressed the OSCE Permanent Council. And now, when the 55-th round of discussions is over, it is about time to take stock of international efforts this year aimed at solving the conflict, fomented by the OSCE participating State the Russian Federation against another participating State Georgia.

Assessing the overall situation, we have to regretfully recognize that after 13 years of conflict the Russian Federation continues taking focused actions aimed at undermining Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Russia's illegal activities aimed at further militarization and de-facto annexation of Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali as well as its attempt to unilaterally define the Georgian-Russian state border along the segment of the mentioned occupied Georgian territories by incorporating a part of Aibga village of Gagra District into Krasnodar Krai, remain unstopped.

We strongly condemn full ban of classes in Georgian language in Gali district schools in Abkhazia region of Georgia. Replacing Georgian with the Russian language in schools is nothing else but a part of Russia's illegal annexation policy towards occupied Georgian regions and clear reflection of ethnic discrimination against Georgian residents, who are deprived of their right to education.

Despite the overall security situation on the ground remained relatively stable the conflict affected population in Georgia kept suffering from further deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Russia-occupied Georgian regions as well as from illegal detentions and restrictions of freedom of movement near and along the occupation line. It is very disturbing that the Odzisi crossing point at the occupation line of Tskhinvali region remains closed for over 2 years now. This negative

development further aggravates the livelihoods of residents of ethnic-Georgian populated Akhagori district and causes its depopulation.

Throughout the year the Russian Federation and its occupation regimes were raising new artificial barriers on the occupation line, preserving inhuman and illegal practice of apprehending the people who were trying to overcome them. We call on the Russian Federation to stop the malpractice of illegal detentions and release Irakli Bebuia and other illegally detained Georgian citizens. All crossing points on the occupation line must be re-opened as soon as possible.

Against this background the Russian Federation and its proxies continuously demonstrate refusal to discuss issues related to internally displaced persons and refugees within the GID negotiation process. It was also the case during the 55-th round of discussions as well. We believe that such an irresponsible and negligent position is just another manifestation of Moscow's real attitude to the hardships of thousands of the conflict affected people in Georgia, who just fell victims of Russian manipulative policy aimed at reaching doubtful geopolitical goals.

The Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) in Ergneti remains a critically important instrument to address specific incidents and issues as well as deescalate possible tensions. Ukraine took note of positive signals on possible resumption of the Gali IPRM. Operation of this mechanism, suspended since 2018, needs to be restored as soon as possible without any preconditions.

Madam Chairperson,

Ukraine strongly condemns the 2008 armed aggression by the Russian Federation against Georgia that resulted in partial occupation of Georgian sovereign territory. Current humanitarian situation in the conflict affected area as well as ongoing status-quo in the Russian-Georgian conflict in the whole are unacceptable.

We call on the Russian Federation to fulfil its obligations under the 2008 EU-mediated ceasefire agreement and withdraw its armed formations and occupation administrations from the temporarily occupied territories of Georgia. In order to reach progress on the security situation on the ground Russia must reciprocate Georgia's constructive approach upon peaceful resolution of the Russian-Georgian conflict. Having unilaterally reaffirmed the non-use of force commitments, Georgia has demonstrated its political will in this regard. It is high time that Russia, as a party to the conflict, did the same.

The Delegation of Ukraine also once again refers to the Judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case concerning the armed conflict between Georgia and the Russian Federation in August 2008 and its consequences and calls on Moscow to fully comply with it.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Ukraine's unwavering support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.