



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council N°1194 Vienna, 30 August 2018

EU Statement on the 10 years Anniversary of the Conflict between Russia and Georgia

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the conflict between Russia and Georgia, which unfortunately still remains unresolved. The European Union expresses its unwavering commitment to a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Georgia in line with OSCE principles and commitments and the fundamental norms of international law. The European Union reiterates its firm support for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. This was reaffirmed also in the recent statement on the 10th anniversary of the conflict by Marija Pejčinović Burić, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia, as the Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

Unfortunately, Russian military presence, increased military exercises and infrastructure reinforcements as well as the illegal acts aiming to include the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia into Russia's regulatory and security space continue further. These steps run contrary to the principles of international law and commitments undertaken by Russia, including the EU-mediated ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 and its implementing measures of 8 September 2008. We continue calling on the Russian Federation to fully implement these commitments.

The European Union is deeply concerned about the continuous deterioration of the human rights situation in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The ongoing violations of freedom of movement, including the continuing so-called “borderization” process and closures of crossing points, the restrictions of property rights and education in mother tongue as well as severe obstacles to the rights of displaced persons are areas of particular concern. The European Union renews its call to the Russian Federation to reverse these trends. We also call for a proper investigation into the tragic death of Mr. Tatumashvili in February 2018 and that justice be applied following the killing of Mr. Otkhozoria in 2016 and Mr. Basharuli in 2014.

The European Union remains engaged and involved in stabilisation and conflict resolution efforts in Georgia, including by continuing its engagement as a co-chair in the Geneva International Discussions, its involvement in the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRMs) and the continued presence on the ground of the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM). We recall that the EUMM, which is the only international presence on the ground, is mandated to access the whole territory of Georgia, including the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. We call on the Russian Federation to remove any obstacles to the work of the EUMM and provide the EUMM access to all regions of Georgia.

During these ten years, Georgia has strengthened its democratic institutions and undertaken reforms in the rule of law. It now represents a model of democratic stability in the region. We welcome the new peace initiative of the Government of Georgia “A Step to a Better Future”, which can benefit the citizens living on both sides of the Administrative Boundary Lines by facilitating trade, education and mobility. Such proposals are in line with the European Union’s policy of non-recognition and engagement with the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The EU and Georgia have signed an ambitious Association Agreement, including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, which guides us in shaping our bilateral relations for years to come. The European Union is committed to support the ongoing work that still needs to be done and will stay engaged in a true partnership with Georgia in building a stable, democratic and prosperous state.

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, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE and ANDORRA align themselves with this statement.

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