



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Geneva International Discussions on the Conflict in Georgia**

As delivered by Deputy Chief of Mission Kate Byrnes  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
October 22, 2015

The United States warmly welcomes the three Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions on the Conflict in Georgia: EU Special Representative Herbert Salber, UN Special Representative Antti Turunen, and OSCE Special Representative Angelo Gnädinger. Thank you for your comprehensive report.

The United States firmly believes that the Geneva International Discussions are critical to enhancing security, stability, and respect for human rights in Georgia. We remain convinced that through the Geneva format, the OSCE, the EU, and the UN play an invaluable role in monitoring the security situation, human rights, and humanitarian conditions in the conflict-affected regions. We believe that the EU, the UN, and the OSCE possess the expertise needed to tackle the challenges inherent in the process. We thank the Co-Chairs for their efforts to move negotiations forward and look forward to continued fruitful cooperation among the three organizations.

The United States participated in the thirty-third round of the Geneva International Discussions (GID) on the conflict in Georgia on October 6-7. Participants held constructive discussions in both working groups, with a particular focus on removing restrictions on freedom of movement and guaranteeing the right to education for all residents in conflict-affected areas. We joined the Co-Chairs of the GID in praising the work of the Ergneti Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism, which helped to repair confidence between participants after increased borderization along the South Ossetia Administrative Boundary Line. We also called for the resumption of the Gali Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism to increase transparency along the Abkhazia Administrative Boundary Line.

We are hopeful that participants will build on these discussions and take practical steps to address the security and humanitarian concerns of the people in the conflict-affected areas.

We urge parties to refrain from divisive acts such as reported calls for a referendum to divide Georgia.

The United States reaffirms its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. We repeat the need for the return of a meaningful OSCE presence to Georgia. And we urge all participants to work constructively and creatively to support future Geneva International Discussions.

Thank you, Madam Chair.