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EMBASSY OF GEORGIA TO THE REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA
PERMANENT MISSION OF GEORGIA TO THE OSCE AND OTHER
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN VIENNA

Statement of the Delegation of Georgia regarding the 22nd round of the Geneva
International Discussions

936 PC, Vienna, 20 December 2012

Mr. Chairman,

The 22nd round of the Geneva International Discussions was held on 12 December 2012. The participants of the Geneva Discussions took part, in their individual capacity, in the two working groups, one focusing on security and stability in Georgia's occupied Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, and the other one on the issues related to the safe and dignified return of IDPs and refugees to the places of their original residence. The discussions were co-chaired by the representatives of the UN, the EU and the OSCE, and attended by the participants from Georgia, the Russian Federation and the United States. The Head of the Provisional Administration of the former South Ossetian Autonomous District and the Chairman of the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, as well as the representatives of the Sokhumi and Tskhinvali proxy regimes also took part in the 22nd round of the Geneva Discussions.

The participants from Georgia stressed the commitment of the new negotiating team, formed after the parliamentary elections, to the continuity of the Geneva International Discussions as the key format for the implementation of the 12 August 2008 ceasefire agreement.

On 11 December, the information session was held on humanitarian needs assessment methodologies. The invited experts acquainted the participants with the international best practices and methodologies for assessing the needs of affected populations across the dividing lines, and stressed the importance of guaranteeing humanitarian access to such areas.

In the framework of the Working Group I of the discussions, the participants addressed the issue of non-use of force and the international security arrangements. Georgia together with the international community representatives has once again called on Russia to fulfil its outstanding obligation and to reciprocate Georgia's unilateral pledge not to use force. The expert group has continued to work on a draft statement by the participants of the Geneva International Discussions on non-use of force tabled by the co-Chairs, as well as reviewed proposals of the Russian participants. The differences of opinion persist in a number of important areas. However, Georgia welcomes the continued engagement of the Russian participants in the document drafting process as a step in the right direction towards Russia's reciprocal non-use of force pledge. The drafting will continue during the next 23rd round of the Geneva International Discussions.

In the Working Group I the participants also discussed the security situation on the ground. Georgia raised concern over the continued obstruction of the Gali Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM), and stressed the importance of its timely resumption in full composition. They also highlighted the worrying trend of increase in a number of detentions for alleged violation of the crossing regulations, as well as additional impediments created for the freedom of movement, including for the most vulnerable individuals seeking urgent medical assistance. In three such cases patients died en route after being refused to cross the occupation line.

Aiming to address these disturbing developments in a durable manner, the co-Chairs have presented the Catalogue of Best Practices on Freedom of Movement as implemented at various stages under the IPRMs. The Georgian participants welcomed this proposal. We hope that various aspects of the freedom of movement

will be discussed in detail during the upcoming rounds of the Geneva Discussions aimed at creating an agreed practical framework for the freedom of movement.

The discussions in the Working Group II started on a positive note. The Georgian participants reconfirmed their commitment to humanitarian, people-centered approach. In the context of constructive engagement, several concrete projects were announced, including the resumption of gas supply to the Akhalkalaki district. The participants from Georgia referred to the outcome of the recent meeting of the Ergneti IPRM in regard with the missing persons, and strongly reaffirmed their dedication to resolve outstanding matters under non-politicized, humanitarian leadership of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The co-Chairs, drawing on the information session held during the previous round, called upon the participants to reflect on the creation of a special body that will address the outstanding cases of missing persons. The Georgian participants took note of this initiative with interest and agreed to provide feedback during the upcoming meetings.

To the profound disappointment of the Georgian as well as international community representatives, the participants of the Tskhinvali and Sokhumi occupation regimes, supported by the participants from Russia, stopped the discussion of pragmatic proposals linking further engagement to their politically motivated agenda for the change of the format of the Geneva International Discussions. Through this action, the Sokhumi and Tskhinvali proxy regimes demonstrated that for them the political considerations related to status take priority over humanitarian needs of the local population.

Similarly, the participants from the Sokhumi and Tskhinvali proxy regimes continued to block the discussion on the core mandate of the Working Group II related to the return of IDPs and refugees. The concrete proposals of co-Chairs on facilitating humanitarian access of certain categories of residents to cemeteries, cultural and religious sites were left unanswered.

The representatives of the proxy regimes of Sokhumi and Tskhinvali, as well as those of Moscow, continued their concerted effort to change the agreed Geneva Discussions format and thus undermining the Geneva International Discussions. As the co-Chair from the EU puts it, “this legal framework cannot be changed without destructing it”. Let me once again remind our Russian colleagues on their commitment undertaken on a number of occasions in the OSCE to respect and preserve “agreed formats” of negotiations for the purpose of peaceful conflict resolution. The co-Chairs at the 22nd round of Geneva International Discussions once again stressed the vital importance of keeping the agreed format of the Geneva Discussions intact and called on all those who obstruct it, to stop this practice. The co-Chairs called for constructive engagement on the issues based on the mandate, which are reflected in the agenda of the two Working Groups. They also pointed out that addressing humanitarian and human rights needs must be separated from the political issues.

Georgia thanks the co-Chairs for their efforts in steering the 22nd round of discussions and expresses its readiness to cooperate with them in a traditionally constructive spirit in preparing the next round of the discussions. Georgia expresses hope that all participants will re-engage positively in the process to improve the security situation and address humanitarian needs of the local population.

The 23rd round of the Geneva International Discussions will be held on 27 March 2013.

Thank You.