

**2013 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
Warsaw, October 2013

## **Statement of the Georgian Delegation**

Working Session 16: Refugees and Displaced Persons

**Mr. Moderator,**

It is a very unfortunate fact that in the 21st century there are millions of displaced persons in the OSCE area and the forced displacement is significantly increasing. Out of 2,5 million IDPs from close to half a million are forcefully displaced within Georgia or from its occupied regions. Unfortunately, the number of the IDPs in Georgia is still raising.

As you are aware Georgia has suffered from ethnic cleansing, expulsion and human rights abuses of its population on the occupied territories of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia in the beginning of the 1990s and as recent as 2008. As a result of the August 2008 Russia-Georgia war followed by the occupation of the significant part of Georgia's territory, the Government has recorded a new wave of over 130,000 IDPs. While some of them were able to get back to so-called buffer zones, almost 26,000 still remain unable to return to their homes on occupied territories.

The Government of Georgia is committed to finding long-term solutions to the plight of IDPs, without prejudice to their right to return. In this regard, recently, progress has been made with regard to protecting IDP rights and providing durable solutions for them. Implementation of the State Strategy on IDPs and its updated Action Plan will continue throughout 2013 to cover housing needs of IDPs remaining in collective centers. In order to improve living conditions of IDPs and provide them with decent durable housing the budget of Ministry of IDPs from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia (MRA) has been doubled in 2013. With the financial support of EU, the construction of 7 apartment blocks in Poti for 280 IDP families is in progress and the preparatory works for the rehabilitation of 28 apartment blocks is underway. In addition to that, KfW started construction of 8 apartment blocks in Samegrelo region for 256 families. With the support of USAID, 10 buildings will be rehabilitated in Imereti region, which will accommodate about 400 families, in addition 8 idle buildings and another 6 collective centers will be further rehabilitated.

Recently the MRA provided 2000 apartments to 480 IDP families; The rehabilitation work was carried out in 15 apartment blocks for 425 IDP families (1300 IDP individuals). The MRA received 32 buildings from the Ministry of Economy for rehabilitation to accommodate IDPs in Tbilisi, Rustavi, Kutaisi, Akhaltsikhe, Zugdidi, Martvili, Poti, Makhinjauri etc. These constructions add up to the planned housing provision by the government of Georgia, which allocated 243 000<sup>2</sup> meters for the construction works in Tbilisi.

Progress has been made in terms of the transfer of accommodations to IDPs in private ownership to 876 IDP families; About 746 extremely vulnerable IDP families received one time financial support from MRA; The Ministry also covered the flat rent for 71 extremely vulnerable IDP families.

A notable shift from humanitarian and emergency aid to development-oriented-programs is in progress. The Government, in cooperation with international donors and partner NGOs (EU, UNDP, UNHCR, USAID, DRC, World Vision, etc.), has been assisting IDP families to become more self-reliant and economically sustainable by providing support in cultivation and planting on the land plots allocated by the State, providing small grants and facilitating small enterprise development.

I will not go into more details at today's meeting depicting Georgia's efforts to alleviate the existential problems of the displaced persons. Our ultimate goal is to fully and unconditionally ensure the right of return of IDPs. As you are aware, the safe and dignified return of the IDPs and refugees to the places of their origin constitutes one of the main issues of the Geneva International Discussions, yet, without any significant result. Another side of conflict not only creates the impediments preventing return of IDPs to their former places of residence, but questions the above mentioned universally recognized principle. The right of return of all internally displaced persons and refugees to their homes throughout Georgia is extensively recognized by international organizations: OSCE, UN, CoE and EU are committed to facilitate the voluntary return of IDPs in safety and dignity.

Dear Colleagues,

Unfortunately, the number of the IDPs in Georgia continues to grow even now, as we speak here.

Since January 2013, the Russian occupation forces and FSB border guards have began the large-scale installation of barbwire fences along the occupation line in the Tskhinvali region in the Gori, Kareli, Kaspi and Akhagori districts. In recent months, this process has intensified and extended. By now, the total length of barbwire fences along the Tskhinvali occupation line has reached 35 km and the process of arrangement is still in progress. In certain segments, the barbwire fence has intruded into the territory controlled by the Central Government of Georgia by 120-150 meters.

In the Abkhazia region, since early June 2013, the Russian occupation forces have started to dig kilometers-long ditches, created embankments and installed engineering structures along the occupation line, between the villages Otobaia (Gali district) – Ganmukhuri and Orsantia (Zugdidi district); Nabakevi (Gali district) – Khurcha (Zugdidi district); Tagiloni (Gali district) – Shamgona (Zugdidi district); and Tagiloni – Chuburkhinji section (Gali district). The ditches reach 3-5 meters in width and 1.7-1.8 meters in depth. By now, the total length of the trenches across the occupation line in the Abkhazia region is 3 km. Furthermore, in the village of Pichora and at the mouth of the river Kodori, Ochamchire district, the Russian military forces have installed high-powered hydrospace detection system.

The installation of artificial obstacles along the occupation line significantly affects the livelihoods of the local population, divides families and communities, and prevents people-to-people contacts. Such illegal activities have blocked the access of the local population to their agricultural lands and potable and irrigation water systems. Residents are prevented from acceding to the local cemeteries and reaching emergency medical services.

The people residing within the occupied regions and in the adjacent areas are deprived of their fundamental rights and freedoms, including, but not limited to the freedom of movement, family life, right to education in native language and other civil and economic rights.

We urge the OSCE to take all appropriate measures to end the illegal process of putting artificial obstacles to the freedom of movement by the Russian side.

Georgian side has been constantly raising the issues pertaining to IDPs with the Russian side at the Geneva International Discussions, which Georgia highly values as a primary venue for discussing security and stability and humanitarian (including IDP) matters with the Russian Federation with the aim to ensure the implementation of the 12 August Ceasefire Agreement. Yet Moscow rejected the applicability of the issue of IDPs.

Besides, special attention should be paid to the alarming attempts to manipulate with the illegal process of “passportization” in occupied Abkhazia, which is used to displace around 25000 local Georgians from the region. These attempts clearly witness the violation of the international principles of human rights and humanitarian law and have a potential to create another wave of IDPs in Georgia, as well as large numbers of stateless persons.

Taking into account all above mentioned, we deem it necessary to:

1. Call upon the Russian Federation to immediately stop and reverse the process of the barbed wire fence installation along the occupation lines in the Tskhinvali and Abkhazia regions, and to comply with the provisions of the 2008 Ceasefire Agreement and its commitments under international law.
2. Call upon the Russian Federation to comply with its obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law and as an occupying power, cease the ongoing flagrant violations of fundamental rights and freedoms of the population residing in the occupied territories and in their vicinity.
3. Urge the international organizations to duly assess Russia’s illegal activities, and undertake appropriate measures in response to the deteriorating security and human rights situation, including through activating human rights monitoring mechanisms.
4. To place OSCE at the forefront of addressing displacement and its consequences. To underlie foundations of our work, the OSCE needs to strengthen its normative and functional basis for dealing effectively and successfully with displacement.

The consolidated diplomatic support is the only instrument that Georgia disposes in the face of the ongoing provocations, while the silence gives the green light to Moscow in its illegal activities.

Thank You!