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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 24th round of the
Geneva International Discussions**

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 959
Vienna, July 4, 2013**

Mr. Chairman,

Dear Colleagues,

The 24th round of the Geneva International Discussions was held on 26 June 2013. The participants of the Geneva Discussions took part, in their individual capacity, in the two Working Groups, the first focusing on security and stability in the occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions of Georgia, and the second 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 EU, the UN 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 occupation regimes also took part in the 24th round of the Geneva Discussions.

On 25 June, the Information Session was held on the "Value and Functions of Unilateral Commitments". The invited experts familiarized the participants with the conditions and forms of the Unilateral Declarations that create a legal obligation of a state. Discussions once again highlighted the importance of Moscow's legally binding commitment not to use force against Georgia.

In the framework of the Working Group I, the participants from Georgia have brought to the attention of the co-Chairs with particular acuity the deteriorating security situation

on the ground that pose a direct threat to peace and stability in the country. The Georgian participants raised their deep concern over the installation of barbed wire fences and embankments by the Russian occupation forces across the occupation line in the Tskhinvali and Abkhazia regions and the expansion of the area of occupation that contravene the 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement and further violate the fundamental principles of international law, primarily of Georgia's sovereignty, territorial integrity and the inviolability of internationally recognized borders. The participants from Georgia demanded the Russian Federation to stop and reverse the illegal activities that lead to the serious aggravation of security context and cause extensive human rights violations and sufferings. In this context, the co-Chairs called upon the participants of the Geneva International Discussions to use the instruments provided by the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms and organize agreed joint visits to the sites.

In the Working Group I, the participants from Georgia emphasized that the deteriorating security situation in the occupied regions further demonstrates the necessity of the full implementation of the EUMM mandate in Georgia and creation of functional international security arrangements. The increased number of detentions underpins the importance of the resumption of the Gali Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRM) in its full composition.

In the framework of the Working Group I of the discussions, the participants addressed one of the central items of the agenda pertaining to the non-use of force. The experts' group, created at the 21st round, was convened to continue work on a draft Statement by the participants of the Geneva International Discussions on non-use of force presented by the co-Chairs. Although the meeting has revealed the substantial differences in the positions of the participants, the Georgian participants have stressed their readiness to constructively engage in the drafting process. The Georgian participants have reiterated their firm position that the progress can be achieved only after the Russian side makes an unilateral legally-binding declaration on non-use of force and reciprocates the Georgia's non-use of force pledge made in 2010 and reiterated and supported by the Parliament of Georgia in March 2013.

In the Working Group II, the Georgian participants have reiterated their priority to provide concrete and result-oriented responses to the existing humanitarian needs of the conflict-affected population and address the persisting violation of human rights in a tangible way. Georgia expressed its particular concern over the humanitarian and human rights consequences of the installation of barbed wire fences and embankments in the Tskhinvali and Abkhazia regions that affects everyday life of people residing in the occupied regions and in their adjacent areas, restricts their right to liberty and security,

protection of property, freedom of movement, right to education, and other civil, social and economic rights. The participants from Georgia have noted that Russia, as an occupying power, exercising effective control over the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions of Georgia, bears responsibility under international humanitarian and human rights law to respect fundamental rights and freedoms of the population residing on the occupied territories. The Georgian side once again emphasized the importance of the creation of human rights monitoring mechanisms in the occupied regions and urgency of facilitating the humanitarian access of international organizations therein.

Within the Working Group II, the co-Moderators have welcomed the unilateral steps undertaken by Georgia to address the issue of missing persons. The completion of water projects has been positively noted and the importance of the continuation of the confidence building mechanisms in the future was further emphasized.

Unfortunately, some participants of the Geneva Discussions chose to walk out from the Working Group II and attempted to join the other group. Facing their disruptive attempts aimed at achieving the change of the existing practice of the conduct of meetings, the co-Chairs have suspended the work. The Georgian side expresses its regret over the destructive attitude of some participants that has hindered the work within the Working Groups and prevented the participants from advancing the substantial issues of the discussions.

The Georgian participants remain hopeful that thanks to co-Chairs efforts the discussions at the next round will take place in a constructive and engaging manner. Georgia will continue its traditionally constructive cooperation with the co-Chairs to ensure the unhindered run of discussions in both Working Groups and advance work on the realization of the main objective to ensure the full implementation of the 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement.

The 25th round of the Geneva International Discussions will be held on 15-16 October 2013.

Thank you.