

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 993rd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

3 April 2014

**Regarding the results of the 27th round of the Geneva International
Discussions on the Trans-Caucasus**

Mr. Chairperson,

We note the substantive and pragmatic discussion of practical issues during the latest round of the International Discussions on security and stability in the Trans-Caucasus on 25 and 26 March in Geneva, with the participation of representatives from the republics of Abkhazia, Georgia and South Ossetia as well as Russia, the United States of America, the European Union, the United Nations and the OSCE.

We noted the observation of the participants in the meeting that there is relative stability on the borders of Abkhazia and South Ossetia with Georgia. In the past four months there have been fewer incidents and no particular problems have been recorded with regard to crossing the border. This is confirmed by the fact that there have been some 50,000 crossings of the South Ossetian border with Georgia and some 2,000 crossings of the border between Abkhazia and Georgia. During the talks an announcement was made regarding the completion in December of last year of the planned construction work on the borders of the two republics with Georgia. As we have said before, only a short segment of the many kilometres of border is fenced, and merely for the purpose of showing where the border is.

The work of the joint Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) on the Georgian-South Ossetian border was commended. We welcome the decision of Tbilisi and Tskhinval on the mutual exchange of individuals convicted of crimes. We think it is important that all the participants in the Geneva Discussions take note of the positive atmosphere of the 43rd IPRM meeting in March and call for a resumption of work by the similar mechanism on the Georgian-Abkhazian border. We note that the "hotline" in this region works perfectly.

As for the renewed claims today of the alleged construction in February of new border fences, particularly near Atotsi, representatives of South Ossetia have already provided documents to refute these claims at the meeting in Geneva. We must also reiterate that Tbilisi's statements regarding violations of Georgian airspace by Russian helicopters are baseless fabrications. Overall, we believe that border issues must be resolved on the ground,

through the IPRM format, and by reaching agreements on the delimitation and demarcation of the borders.

During the talks, some progress was made on finalizing a draft joint statement by the participants in the Geneva Discussions on the non-use of force. It would be an important interim step towards concluding fully fledged agreements and would bolster the positive momentum provided by the unilateral statements of the leaders of the three republics – Abkhazia, Georgia and South Ossetia – on refraining from the use of force. At the same time, there have again been contrived attempts to raise the issue of certain unilateral commitments by Russia on the non-use of force against Georgia. We must reiterate that such ideas are senseless – Tbilisi needs to resolve this problem directly with its neighbours from Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The discussion in the humanitarian group was useful. The issues discussed were freedom of movement, missing persons, the exchange of detainees, water supply to the border regions of Georgia and South Ossetia, and the protection of cultural heritage. We particularly note the assistance of the Swiss OSCE Co-Chairman in gaining the understanding of the discussion participants in Geneva on continuing to work on this track without undue politicization.

Furthermore, at the Geneva meeting, information was provided on Russia's efforts to assist in the socio-economic development of the young republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, including in the area of health care, to which a special information session was devoted during the last round. It is worth recalling the demand made at the meeting by South Ossetia to conduct a proper investigation of the fates of the South Ossetians who disappeared in August 2008 as well as a detailed report by Abkhazia on the continuing discrimination against its citizens in applying for foreign visas and the recognition of qualifications.

In conclusion, we should like to note the renewed calls to re-establish an OSCE presence in Georgia. As we have repeatedly stated, we are ready together with other participating States to constructively examine this question. Of course, this mission's mandate will not extend to the neighbouring independent States of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which are not yet OSCE participating States. On the question of establishing OSCE field presences in those States, we should first turn directly to Sukhum and Tskhinval.

Thank you for your attention.