



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council Nr 993 Vienna, 3 April 2014

EU Statement on the 27th Round of the Geneva International Discussions

The European Union reiterates its strong support for the Geneva International Discussions, the latest round of which took place on 25-26 of March 2014. The EU continues to support the active participation of the OSCE in the process, and believes that its extensive cross dimensional-experience and its contribution on the ground can be useful.

The persistent challenges continue to demonstrate that there is an urgent need for a meaningful cross-dimensional OSCE presence throughout Georgia, not least for the benefit of the civilian population, and including a robust monitoring capacity able to operate unhindered across the Administrative Boundary Lines.

The EU considers the Geneva International Discussions to be the essential forum for discussing and resolving challenges stemming from the conflict in Georgia. We welcome the relatively stable and calm situation that has prevailed since the previous round of the Discussions in December 2013. However, we note with deep concern the continuing installation of fences and other obstacles at different locations along the Administrative Boundary Lines, as well as reports on violations of the airspace of Georgia by the Russian Federation. Such activities violate Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty. We call on the Russian Federation to remove the fences and other obstacles. Alleged concerns for security cannot be used as an excuse for consolidating an illegal and illegitimate situation on the ground. We call on all participants to address those unacceptable developments, including within the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRM) with the aim to find appropriate solutions. In this context, the EU reiterates the importance of resuming the effective functioning of the Gali Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRM) meetings, and welcomes the constructive work done within the Ergneti IPRM.

The non-use of force and international security arrangements continue to be core subjects of the Discussions. We note that some steps were taken on the draft joint statement of participants on non-use of force, while positions continue to differ significantly. We welcome participants' agreement to continue working on the draft statement at the next round. In this context, the EU calls on all participants to continue to work together towards sustainable security arrangements. We continue to believe that a clear commitment by Russia on non-use of force is necessary.

Referring to discussions in Working Group Two, the European Union reiterates its concern about the implications on the affected population created by the restrictions on freedom of movement due to the installation of fences and other obstacles along the Administrative Boundary Lines. We reiterate our call to all stakeholders to engage constructively in order to limit the impact on the affected communities and to ensure full exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of movement across the Administrative Boundary Lines. In this context, the EU took note of a more pragmatic approach taken by participants on a number of issues relating to the humanitarian situation on the ground.

The European Union takes this opportunity to recall its firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders and reiterates its concern about the continuing Russian military and security related presence and infrastructure reinforcements in the Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The EU calls on Russia to fulfil its obligations under the ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 and its subsequent implementing measures of 8 September 2008, including providing the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM) with access to the breakaway regions. The EUMM plays a leading role in the IPRMs within its stabilisation, normalisation and confidence-building mandate. We also reiterate our call for unhindered access for humanitarian organisations.

We look forward to the next round of the Geneva International Discussions scheduled for 17-18 June 2014.

The candidate countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO and ICELAND**, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA and BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, the European Free Trade Association country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, MOLDOVA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

*The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

**Iceland continues to be a member of EFTA and the European Economic Area.