



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council Nr 959 Vienna, 4 July 2013

EU statement on the 24th Round of the Geneva Discussions

The European Union reiterates its strong support for the Geneva International Discussions, the latest round of which took place on 25-26 June 2013 under the co-chairmanship of the European Union, the OSCE and the United Nations. We are grateful to the OSCE and its Chairmanship for their active involvement and continuous support to the process. The OSCE brings into our efforts its unique experience of the area, and we remain convinced that there is strong need for a meaningful presence of the OSCE throughout Georgia. Together with other actors, this Organisation could help restoring normal living conditions for the civilian population and re-building trust among stakeholders. The European Union is cooperating actively with the OSCE on water-related projects. We see this as crucial, both as a confidence-building measure and as a way to improve concretely the living conditions on the ground.

The Geneva Discussions, in their agreed format, continues to be the only forum to address and resolve the challenges stemming from the conflict in Georgia, with the participation of all stakeholders. All participants should be committed to this process and engage constructively in its work.

We note with concern the relentless fencing activities on the ground. These activities have very negative effects on the freedom of movement and the livelihood of the local population, on both sides of the dividing lines. The IPRM meetings, in which all stakeholders take part, must do all they can to alleviate these consequences. It is therefore more important than ever that the Gali IPRM be allowed to resume its important function.

With regard to issues related to security, the issue of non-use of force and international security arrangements continues to be a core subject of the Geneva discussions. Experts of Working Group One have continued their work on a draft

statement on non-use of force based on the Co-Chairs' proposal. Work needs to continue on this issue, and a clear commitment to non-use of force by the Russian Federation, in response to the commitment already made by Georgia, remains critical for progress. Participants in Geneva took part in an information session devoted to the "value and functions of unilateral commitments" in international law. Let us hope this will provide food for thought and allow progress on the issue.

Working Group Two continued its work focused on IDP and humanitarian issues. Here as well as in Geneva, the European Union wants to call on all stakeholders to do all they can to improve living conditions for people affected by the conflicts, regardless of political or status-related considerations. The EU reiterates its commitment to help improve the situation of Internally Displaced Persons in Georgia and refugees from the conflicts and their unconditional right to safe and dignified return. Issues related to humanitarian aspects of freedom of movement were discussed at length, and we reiterate our concern about the humanitarian consequences of the recent developments at different locations along the Administrative Boundary Lines. Missing persons were discussed as well, with some progress being recorded on this painful issue.

We deeply regret that some participants walked out from Working Group Two, with the result that the whole session had to be suspended. Once again, we strongly believe that all stakeholders have a duty to engage constructively on humanitarian challenges, free of political or status-related considerations.

The EU once more recalls its firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised 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 the Tskhinvali region/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 access to EUMM 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 call on all participants to remain committed to the process under the agreed format and we look forward to the next round of the Geneva discussions currently scheduled for 15-16 October 2013.

The Candidate Countries, the former Yugoslav Republic of MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+ and SERBIA*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates ALBANIA and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of MOLDOVA align themselves with this statement.

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

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