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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

S T A T E M E N T

of the Delegation of Georgia

on the 18th round of Geneva International Discussions

as delivered at the 894th session of the OSCE Permanent Council

Vienna, December 15, 2011

Mr Chairman,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The 18th round of the Geneva International Discussions was held on December 14, 2011, where the issues of security and stability in Georgia's occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions and safe and dignified return of the IDPs and refugees to the places of their original residence were discussed. In meetings of the two working groups held on December 14, participants took part in an individual capacity. Discussions were moderated by the representatives of the UN, the EU 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, Mr. Dimitri Sanakoev and the Chairman of the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, Mr. Giorgi Baramia took part in the 18th round of the Geneva Discussions.

Representatives of the proxy regimes from Tskhinvali and Sokhumi also participated in the working groups. The Delegation from Georgia was headed by the deputy foreign minister Mr. Sergi Kapanadze.

During the 18th round of the discussions, the Georgian side expressed its appreciation for the efforts of the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for Protracted Conflicts, Ambassador Giedrius Čekuolis, and welcomed the 2012 Irish OSCE Chairmanship's Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the new Co-Chair of the Geneva Discussions, Ambassador Pádraig Murphy.

Within the first working group of the Geneva Discussions, which focuses on the ways to reach an agreement on the Non-Use of Force (NUF) and the International Security Arrangements (ISA), concrete steps from the plan proposed by the Co-Chairs were discussed. It was emphasized that security and stability will be established only after the Russian Federation undertakes the commitment not to use force against Georgia and fully implements all provisions of the August 12 Ceasefire Agreement, including the withdrawal of the military forces from Georgia's occupied regions. The Co-Chairs of the Geneva Discussions, as well as the representatives of the U.S. once again reiterated their call on the Russian Federation to pledge the non-use of force towards Georgia. The necessity of such commitments from the Russian side is extremely important in the context of continuous militarization of Georgia's occupied territories and against the background of the intensification of aggressive rhetoric from various Russian officials. In this context particular attention was drawn to the recent provocative statements from Mr. Patrushev and Mr. Lavrov. The Georgian side remains hopeful that the Russian Federation will reciprocate the Tbilisi's unilateral pledge on the non-use of force made in November 2010 and will undertake the commitment not to use force against Georgia. Work will continue in this respect during the upcoming rounds of the Geneva talks.

Georgian side once again requested to discuss seriously the establishment of international security arrangements inside the occupied regions. It was stressed by many participants that the international security arrangements represent the best guarantee for peace and the non-resumption of hostilities. The Co-Chairs once again urged the participants to discuss in good faith the issue of international presence within the occupied territories, and to enable the EUMM to fully implement its mandate and guarantee unhindered humanitarian access to the regions. Concrete steps have been proposed in this regard, which will continue to be reviewed during the forthcoming rounds.

During the 18th round the Georgian side once again brought to the attention of the Co-Chairs the cases of the violations of freedom of movement in the vicinity of the occupied territories and expressed its concern regarding the continuous practice of arbitrary detentions of the local population by the Russian FSB border guards and the proxy regimes. Once again the co-chairs have made a strong call on all participants to refrain from such practice and to release the detained persons.

Participants stressed the continuous good work of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms and expressed readiness to continue addressing the issues affecting the security of the populations on the ground in good faith. Several participants underlined the necessity of full utilization of the potential of the IPRMs.

Within the second working group, unfortunately, Moscow and its proxy regimes still refuse to discuss humanitarian issues related to safe, dignified and voluntary return of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees to the places of their original residence. It is absolutely necessary to uphold the internationally recognized right of IDPs and refugees to return to their homes, and the Georgian side remains hopeful that next rounds will demonstrate progress in this regard.

The 19th round of the Geneva International Discussions will take place on March 29, 2012.

Thank you.