



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1191  
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**EU Statement on the 44th round of the Geneva  
International Discussions on 19-20 June 2018**

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The European Union reiterates the view that the Geneva International Discussions (GID) continue to be a crucial forum to address and resolve the challenges stemming from the conflict in Georgia, with the participation of all stakeholders. We welcome the Co-Chairs' suggestion to develop ideas on how to make the GID format more effective and productive, and we look forward to concrete ideas in this regard.

The European Union notes that the security situation was mainly assessed as relatively calm and stable. We note the crucial role of both Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms, to which the EUMM together with the OSCE and UN is making an important contribution, as well as their associated hotlines, in this regard. This is essential for confidence, predictability and transparency on the ground, especially when dealing with potentially serious security incidents.

We regret that there was no progress on a joint statement on the non-use of force by all parties, and we continue to believe that a clear non-use of force statement by Russia is essential. Russia continues to violate Georgian sovereignty and territorial integrity through its military, security related presence and infrastructure reinforcements in the Georgian breakaway regions. The European Union encourages further efforts on the non-use of force issue and, in particular with a view to establishing much-needed additional international mechanisms, to monitor the fulfilment of non-use of force commitments.

We note that this round of the GID, as well as the previous one, was again negatively affected by the death in custody in Tskhinvali in February of a Georgian citizen, Mr Tatunashvili. We are concerned about the impunity surrounding this fatal incident

and, in this context, recall the cases of Mr Basharuli in 2014 and Mr Otkhozoria in May 2016. The EU calls for a thorough investigation into these cases and for justice to be applied.

We strongly reject the repeated accusations by the Russian Federation that the EUMM violated the so-called “state border” of South Ossetia. We recall that the EUMM, which is the only international presence on the ground, is mandated to access the whole territory of Georgia, including its breakaway regions. In this context, we urge the removal of obstacles to the work of the EUMM, which fulfils an indispensable stabilization function on the ground, to the benefit of all the communities afflicted by the conflict.

We regret that the discussions on humanitarian issues took place in a difficult atmosphere. We are deeply concerned about the ongoing restrictions to freedom of movement, including the continuing “borderization” process, the long-term negative impact of the closures of crossing points on the Abkhaz administrative boundary line, as well as the recent decision by the South Ossetian so-called “parliament” to create a so-called “commission on demarcation of the state border”. Furthermore, the ongoing attempts to push mother-tongue based education out of schools in both breakaway regions as well as enforcement of the new “rules” with regard to the documentation for ethnic Georgians in Abkhazia and South Ossetia further exacerbate the already inadequate access of local residents to basic rights and services.

We underline that the issue of refugees and IDPs and their safe, dignified and voluntary return, continues to constitute a key agenda item in the GID. In this respect, we regret that participants from the Russian Federation and the breakaway regions of Georgia decided once again to walk out from the discussion on this issue in Working Group II. We call upon all participants to engage on all issues on the agenda, regardless of the views expressed in other international fora.

The European Union remains convinced that there is an urgent need for a meaningful cross-dimensional OSCE presence throughout Georgia. We reiterate our firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. The European Union calls on Russia to fulfil its obligations under the ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 and its subsequent

implementing measures of 8 September 2008. The European Union also calls for access to the breakaway regions for EUMM as well as for human rights monitoring mechanisms, humanitarian and other civil society organizations.

We note that this round of the discussions was the last one for the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for the South Caucasus, Ambassador Günther Bächler, and we thank him for his commitment to peace and stability in the region and wish him success in his future endeavours.

The European Union looks forward to the next round of the GID scheduled for 9-10 October 2018.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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