



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1138
Vienna, 23 March 2017**

**EU Statement on "So-called elections in the occupied
Abkhazia region of Georgia"**

In view of the reports about the so-called "elections" that took place on 12 March in the Georgian breakaway region of Abkhazia, we recall that the European Union does not recognise the constitutional and legal framework within which these elections have taken place. The European Union also condemns and does not recognise the decision by the de facto authorities in the Georgian breakaway region of South Ossetia to conduct so-called "presidential elections" and an illegal "referendum" on changing the name of the Georgian breakaway region of South Ossetia'.

As regards the announcement about a draft agreement on the incorporation of a number of military personnel of the Georgian breakaway region of South Ossetia into the Russian Armed Forces, we consider any step in this direction detrimental to ongoing efforts to strengthen security and stability in the region. This so-called agreement will have no legal status for the EU. Continued Russian military and security related presence and infrastructure reinforcements violate international law, including the principles of inviolability of Georgia's sovereignty, territorial integrity and internationally recognized borders. It also contradicts commitments made by the Russian Federation, under the 12 August 2008 Agreement and its Implementing Measures of 8 September 2008.

All these steps go against ongoing efforts to peaceful resolution of the conflict. The Geneva International Discussions, which continues to be a very important forum to address and resolve the challenges stemming from the conflict in Georgia, will provide a venue to further discuss these matters.

The European Union reiterates its firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders. The European Union

calls on the Russian Federation to fulfil its obligations and to provide EUMM access to the breakaway regions.

The Candidate Countries TURKEY, 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 country ICELAND, 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, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.