



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1340 Vienna, 21 October 2021

EU Statement on the 54th round of Geneva International Discussions

1. Madam Chair, the European Union welcomes the fact that the 54th round of the Geneva International Discussions (GID) was held in person on 12-13 October. A secure, stable, peaceful and prosperous South Caucasus is a priority for the EU and we wish to thank the GID Co-Chairs for their tireless work in this regard. The EU also fully supports the Co-Chairs' efforts to continue promoting the meaningful participation of women in the conflict resolution process. It is essential that the voices of women be heard throughout the phases of the conflict cycle, including in this particular conflict.
2. Madam Chair, the resolution of the conflict in Georgia is only possible if there is strong political will by all sides to implement their respective commitments and to engage constructively in the negotiating formats. In this context, we wish to commend Georgia for demonstrating such a commitment. We call on Russia to implement the EU-mediated 2008 ceasefire agreement and its implementing measures fully and in good faith.
3. The EU takes positive note of the fact that the overall security situation on the ground was assessed by the participants as relatively stable. Still, we regret that serious outstanding issues, such as ongoing detentions, unresolved missing person cases and restrictions on freedom of movement remain unaddressed. This is why we welcome that there was an information session held on *comprehensive and human dimensions of security* where the participants could have an exchange of views on the needs of the conflict-affected populations. Sincere dialogue is essential in order to build trust and confidence and to significantly contribute to a sustainable solution of the conflict.

4. We also welcome the fact that the discussions particularly focused on core security issues, such as non-use of force and the international security arrangements. We encourage further efforts in this direction and would regard a clear non-use of force statement by Russia as a substantial step forward. In this context, we are concerned about the intensified militarisation of the Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the military exercises conducted in recent months.
5. It is highly regrettable that the ongoing violations of the freedom of movement, including through the actively pursued so-called “borderization” process, continue to severely impact the security, safety and well-being of the local population. The 26-month long closure of all checkpoints at the Administrative Boundary Line to South Ossetia is contributing to the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the region. In this vein, we welcome the lifting of restrictions at the Enguri bridge and the Saberio-Pakhulani checkpoints and we call for the full restoration of freedom of movement, in particular at the Odizisi checkpoint.
6. The continued practice of detaining Georgian citizens near the Administrative Boundary Line is highly concerning. We reiterate our call for the immediate release of all illegally detained Georgian citizens and for thorough investigations of the fatalities in arbitrary detention. Such actions run contrary to the principles of international law and commitments undertaken by Russia, including in the EU-mediated 2008 ceasefire agreement and its implementing measures. We also call for continued efforts to achieve progress on outstanding cases of missing persons.
7. We regret that the GID discussions regarding IDPs and refugees were again disrupted due to the walkout of Russian, Abkhaz and South Ossetian participants. As humanitarian issues are of utmost importance, we call on all GID participants to engage in discussions on these matters constructively.
8. The EU welcomes the continuous efforts undertaken at the Ergneti IPRM meeting in order to ease tensions and to facilitate dialogue on the ground. We regret that the Gali IPRM now has been suspended for over 3 years and call for its immediate and unconditional resumption.
9. We condemn the holding of the elections to the Russian State Duma in the Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This is a clear violation of

sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders.

10. Madam Chair, the Geneva International Discussions remain the key international platform for facilitating a peaceful resolution of the conflict. The EU will continue to be actively involved in this format. We will also support the conflict resolution through the work of the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM), which remains the only international presence on the ground.
11. In conclusion, the EU calls on Russia to fulfil its obligations under the EU-mediated ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 and its subsequent implementing measures of 8 September 2008. The EU also calls for access for the EUMM to the whole territory of Georgia, including its regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as per the EUMM's mandate, as well as for human rights monitoring mechanisms, humanitarian and other civil society organizations. The European Union urges the Russian Federation to ensure the proper follow-up of the landmark judgement of 21 January 2021 of the ECHR in the case Georgia vs Russia.

The Candidate Countries the REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, and ALBANIA*, the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA, and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.