



## **EUROPEAN UNION**

### **OSCE Permanent Council No. 1344 Vienna, 11 November 2021**

#### **EU statement in reply to the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions**

1. The European Union warmly welcomes the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions (GID), Ambassador Annika Söder, Ambassador Cihan Sultanoğlu, and Ambassador Toivo Klaar, to the Permanent Council and thanks them for their presentation. We highly appreciate the close cooperation the EU, the OSCE and the UN enjoy within the GID format.
2. The EU values the unique role of the Geneva International Discussions in facilitating a peaceful and sustainable resolution of this conflict and we reaffirm our continued active involvement in the format. However, the resolution of this conflict is only possible if there is a strong political will from all sides to implement their respective commitments and to engage constructively in the existing negotiating formats. We urge Russia to fully assume its responsibility as a party to the conflict and to implement the EU-mediated 2008 ceasefire agreement and its implementing measures fully and in good faith.
3. We welcome the fact that three GID meetings have been held in person already during 2021 and a fourth is scheduled for December. We welcome the fact that the discussions focused on core security issues, such as non-use of force and the international security arrangements. A clear non-use of force statement by Russia would be a substantial step forward. However, we regret the lack of substantive discussions on IDPs and refugees. We call upon all participants to engage on all issues in line with their commitments to the GID and urge the Russian, Abkhaz and South Ossetian participants to stop their practice of walkouts. Sincere dialogue is essential in order to build trust and confidence and to significantly contribute to a sustainable solution of the conflict.
4. The EU is committed to further contribute to the work of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRMs) in order to maintain security on the ground.

The IPRMs are a unique opportunity, together with the EUMM-managed hotline, to exchange information, discuss and solve concrete issues, defuse tensions, build confidence and maintain stability. We therefore welcome the fact that we have had three Ergneti IPRM meetings during 2021 and urge for the immediate and unconditional resumption of IPRM meetings in Gali, to be held in line with the established practices and without any preconditions.

5. The EU also fully supports the Co-Chairs' efforts in promoting the meaningful participation of women in the conflict resolution process. We are also pleased that issues and challenges faced by conflict-affected women and girls are being discussed in the GID.
6. We reiterate our concern about the continuing Russian illegal military presence in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the military exercises conducted there in recent months. We would also like to highlight that the continued practice of detaining Georgian citizens near the Administrative Boundary Line 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 call for the immediate and unconditional release of Mr. Irakli Bebuia and all other illegally detained Georgian citizens. We also call for continued efforts to achieve progress on the outstanding cases of missing persons.
7. We deplore the fact that some Georgian citizens were prevented from crossing the administrative boundary lines during the conduct of the local elections on 2 and 30 October, thus depriving them of their right to vote. This is a clear violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders.
8. The EU once again underlines its deep concern about the continuing deterioration in the human rights situation in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The ongoing violations of the freedom of movement, including through the closure of crossing points along the South Ossetian Administrative Boundary Line, and the actively pursued so-called "borderization" process, continue to severely impact the security, safety and well-being of the local population. We urge the Russian Federation to ensure that the restrictions to the freedom of movement are lifted.

9. The European Union Monitoring Mission is the sole international presence on the ground and works tirelessly to contribute to stabilisation, normalisation and confidence building. We recall that the EUMM mandate covers the whole territory of Georgia, including its regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.
10. The European Union reiterates its support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. We call on the Russian Federation to fulfil its obligations under the EU-mediated ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 and its subsequent implementing measures. In addition, we urge Russia to ensure the proper follow-up of the landmark judgement of 21 January 2021 of the ECHR in the case Georgia vs Russia.
11. In conclusion, we would like to thank the GID Co-Chairs for their resolute work and look forward to the 55th round of the Geneva International Discussions scheduled for 7-8 December.

The Candidate Countries the REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\*, the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, 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.