

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR
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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF GEORGIA
IN RESPONSE TO THE REPORT BY THE
CO-CHAIRS OF GENEVA INTERNATIONAL DISCUSSIONS
971ST PERMANENT COUNCIL
(November 14, 2013)**

Mr. Chairman,

Let me warmly welcome the co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions Ambassador Deshytsia, Ambassador Lefort and Ambassador Turunen and their skilled team members to the Permanent Council. I would like to thank you, Excellencies, for your interventions, which are important contribution to our work within the OSCE, especially in the run up of the Kyev Ministerial. Recently, we had the 25th round of the talks, completing the 5th consecutive year since the first meeting of the Geneva Discussions held in October 2008.

Dear Colleagues,

Let me once again reiterate that the Government of Georgia remains fully committed to the Geneva International Discussions as the key format for the implementation of the 12 August Ceasefire Agreement. Making enhanced efforts to resolve the Russia-Georgia conflict in a peaceful manner within the agreed format is fully in line with our joint commitments undertaken within the OSCE. We highly value the Geneva Discussions as a forum, where the issues of security and stability in the occupied regions of Georgia and the safe and dignified return of IDPs and refugees to places of their original residence are discussed.

Importance that we attach to the Geneva International Discussions explains our vital interest in ensuring the unhindered run of work within both Working Groups enabling us to focus on the substance of the discussions and address the alarming security and human rights situation in the occupied regions of Georgia. In this regard, we appreciate co-Chairs' role in keeping the agreed format and the working agenda of the Geneva International Discussions intact and their commitment to the process.

Dear Colleagues,

Let me update you on some of the principal items discussed within the Geneva talks and the state of discussions.

Unfortunately, since the last few rounds, in the framework of the Working Group I, we have to focus on the installation of barbed wire fences and embankments by the Russian occupation forces along the occupation line in the Tskhinvali and Abkhazia regions that has further intensified and extended in the recent months and that continues to pose a direct threat to stability in the country. The abovementioned activities by the Russian Federation are illegal under international law as they blatantly violate the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and the inviolability of Georgia's internationally recognized borders, and are in a clear breach of the 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement.

The deteriorating security situation in the occupied regions stresses the necessity of ensuring the access of the EUMM to both regions that is permanently raised by the Georgian participants. Let me remind you that due to the artificial impediments created by Russia, the EUMM is blocked from fully implementing its mandate in Georgia. In addition, the existing security context proves the urgency to resume the work of the Gali IPRM without the precondition and in its full composition. Although the utilization of full potential of the IPRMs and its instruments remains a task to be achieved, this Mechanism has already proved to be absolutely essential to the peace and stability on the ground. Furthermore, we are confident that we need to redouble our efforts and revitalize our discussions on another fundamental item on our working agenda – the creation of effective international security arrangements within the occupied regions.

Dear Colleagues,

As you are aware, in the framework of the Working Group I of the discussions, one of central items of our working agenda pertains to the Non-Use of Force. Unfortunately, regardless of a unilateral legally binding commitment to non-use of force made by the Georgian President in 2010 and reiterated by the Parliament of Georgia in March 2013, the Russian Federation still fails to undertake a reciprocal pledge. The Georgian participants value the efforts of the co-Chairs in facilitating the Moscow's pledge on non-use of force and believe that their initiative to advance work on a draft Statement by the participants of the Geneva International Discussions on non-use of force on expert level has been a step in a right direction. While we are ready to reflect on the key aspects of the document during the 26th round of the discussions, we encourage all participants to constructively engage in the drafting process on expert level. Yet, I would like to clearly emphasize that this statement can be adopted only after the Russian Federation reciprocates the Georgia's unilateral legally-binding non-use of force pledge. Let me use this opportunity and once again call upon the Russian side to make a unilateral legally-binding declaration on non-use of force.

Within the Working Group II, our priority is to address the existing humanitarian needs of the conflict-affected population and the persisting violation of human rights in an effective, non-politicized and sustainable manner. The concrete consequences of Russia's illegal activities along the occupation line significantly impact humanitarian and human rights situation of the local residents - they divide families and communities, prevent people-to-people contacts, block the access of the local population to their agricultural lands and water systems and prevent them from acceding to the cemeteries and emergency services. We are extremely concerned over the evidences of the restriction of the right to liberty and security, protection of property, freedom of movement, right to education, and other civil, social and economic rights. The adequate solution to the humanitarian and human rights crisis created in the occupied regions and their vicinities is the creation of human rights monitoring mechanisms in the occupied regions and facilitation of the humanitarian access of international organizations therein.

Geneva International Discussions allows us to initiate and plan the confidence building mechanisms that we highly value. Yet, unfortunately, our efforts to provide practical solutions to humanitarian needs are met with the attempts of Sokhumi and Tskhinvali to instrumentalize the humanitarian issues for their political purposes. We once again reiterate our offer to ensure gas supply to the Akhlagori residents.

As you all are informed, the return of IDPs is a central issue of our discussions within the Working Group II, yet without any progress. Unfortunately, Tskhinvali and Sokhumi regimes, backed by Russian authorities, continue to reject the applicability of internationally recognized basic principles, including, of safe and dignified return of IDPs and refugees.

At the end, I would like once again thank the co-Chairs for their presentations. Let me reiterate our commitment to the Geneva process and express our readiness to continue our traditionally constructive cooperation with the co-Chairs to ensure the substantive discussions in both Working Groups.

Thank you.