



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions on Georgia

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 14, 2013

I warmly welcome the three Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions on the Conflict in Georgia – EU Special Representative Philippe Lefort, UN Special Representative Antti Turunen, and the OSCE Chairmanship's Special Representative Andrii Deshchysia. Thank you for your comprehensive report.

The United States firmly believes that the Geneva International Discussions are critical to enhancing security, stability, and respect for human rights in Georgia. We remain convinced that the OSCE and other international actors can play a valuable role in resolving problems, providing humanitarian assistance, and monitoring human rights and humanitarian conditions. In this regard, unhindered access to the whole of Georgia is essential.

We appreciate the ongoing efforts of the Geneva Co-Chairs to facilitate progress towards these goals. We believe the EU, the UN, and the OSCE together possess the expertise needed to tackle the challenges inherent in the process, and look forward to continued fruitful cooperation among the three organizations.

We reiterate our support for the return of a meaningful OSCE presence in Georgia.

The United States joined the twenty-fifth round of these discussions on November 5th and 6th. We reiterated that the construction of physical barriers along the Administrative Boundary Lines (ABL) for the occupied Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia undermine our joint efforts to reach a negotiated solution to this conflict, and have a negative impact on those living in areas affected by the conflict. These barriers are inconsistent with Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and contrary to Russia's international commitments. Their removal would be an important step towards building peace and security, and restoring freedom of movement within the internationally-recognized territory of Georgia. We commend the government of Georgia for meeting these provocative activities with patience, which underscores yet again its commitment to a peaceful settlement and the non-use of force in resolving this conflict.

We join the Co-Chairs in calling for a timely resumption of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) in Gali as a means of improving communication and mitigating tensions on the ABL for the Abkhazia region, and we again note that the surest way to increase trust between the parties and improve the lives of people on the ground would be to grant access across the boundary line for all people, humanitarian organizations, and the EU Monitoring Mission. The Ergneti IPRM is a valuable instrument.

The United States will continue to engage on these issues with the support of the participants and the Co-Chairs in the coming months. We look forward to the 26th round of the Geneva International Discussions on December 17th and 18th.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.