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**EUROPEAN UNION**

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 936  
Vienna, 20 December 2012**

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**EU statement on the 22<sup>nd</sup> round of the Geneva discussions**

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The European Union reiterates its strong support for the Geneva discussions, the latest round of which took place on 12 December 2012. We continue to support the OSCE's active participation in the meetings, in which good use can be made of its extensive cross-dimensional experience.

The current format of the Geneva discussions continues to be the only forum to address and resolve the challenges and problems related to the conflict in Georgia, with the participation of all stakeholders. We call on all parties to remain committed to this process and to work together constructively.

With regard to the First Working Group, the EU welcomes the relative calm maintained since the last round of the Geneva discussions, but notes with concern the tensions and incidents on the ground. In this context, the EU underlines the need to resume the effective functioning of the Gali Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) meetings. We positively note that participants exchanged their views on the draft of the statement on non-use of force based on the Co-Chairs' proposal. We welcome that the expert group held a drafting session on the Co-chairs' draft proposal, and we look forward to continued exchanges in the next round of Geneva Discussions. The issue of non-use of force and international security arrangements continues to be the main stumbling block in the Geneva Discussions. In this regard, a clear non-use of force commitment by Russia would be necessary.

Regarding the Second Working Group, we continue to call on all parties to urgently improve living conditions for people affected by the August 2008 conflict. We take note that the Co-moderators of Working Group II put forward

a new initiative on humanitarian visits related to displaced persons and various options for institutionalising the work on missing persons. We regret that some participants decided to walk out of the afternoon session of the Working Group II, which led to disruption of work. We call on all participants to engage in dialogue and continue working on issues that are essential in order to improve the situation on the ground. In view of the ongoing water projects in South Ossetia, the EU continues to closely co-operate with the OSCE for the benefit of the communities. We reiterate our call on all stakeholders to engage constructively in order to restore basic utilities and services to the affected communities and to ensure freedom of movement across the administrative boundary line.

The EU once more recalls its firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders and reiterates its concern about the continuing Russian military and security-related presence and infrastructure reinforcements in the Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The EU calls on Russia to fulfill its obligations under the ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 and Implementing Measures of 8 September 2008, including by providing access to EUMM to the breakaway regions. The EUMM plays a leading role in the IPRMs within its stabilisation, normalisation and confidence-building mandate. We also reiterate our call for unhindered access for humanitarian organisations.

We remain convinced of the urgent need for a meaningful cross-dimensional OSCE presence throughout Georgia, in particular for the benefit of the civilian population, including robust monitoring capacity able to operate unhindered across the administrative boundary lines.

Once again we call on all participants to remain committed to the process under the agreed format. We look forward to the next round of the Geneva discussions, scheduled for 27 March 2013.

The Acceding Country Croatia\*, the Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, Montenegro\*, Iceland+ and Serbia\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA countries Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

\* Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.