



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1045 Vienna, 19 March 2015

EU Statement in response to Deputy Foreign Minister, H.E. David Dondua

The European Union warmly welcomes Deputy Foreign Minister David Dondua to the Permanent Council. Mr. Deputy Minister, we thank you for your comprehensive and timely address.

The European Union and Georgia enjoy a strong relationship, which has been significantly enhanced through the signing of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement in June 2014. The Agreement, provisionally applied since September, allows us to move ahead with deeper political association and economic integration.

In this context, the reform agenda in such vital areas as economy, rule of law and judiciary is key, as is fostering a political climate with respect for opposition and cross-party dialogue. Sustainable implementation of these reforms will transform and modernise Georgia, to the benefit of all its citizens.

The EU remains committed to strengthening the security of the whole OSCE region. We believe that it is essential that we achieve tangible progress towards the resolution of the protracted conflicts. We welcome that the latest round of the Geneva International Discussions took place this week, on 17-18 March.

The 31st round turned out to be very difficult due to divergent views and approaches of participants on various issues. We welcome that some progress was registered in the work on a draft joint statement by all participants on non-use of force. We regret however, that the discussions of this round could not be fully exhausted due to a dispute over the agenda.

Recent actions by the Russian Federation have indeed substantially harmed the constructive spirit of the discussions. The signature by the Russian Federation of a so-called "Treaty on Alliance and Integration" with Georgia's breakaway region of

South Ossetia is yet another step that goes against ongoing efforts to strengthen security and stability in the region.

Like the previous agreements signed between the Russian Federation and the two Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, this so-called treaty – which includes references to a transfer of powers in some areas – clearly violates Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, principles of international law and the international commitments taken by the Russian Federation, including the 12 August 2008 Agreement and its Implementing Measures of 8 September 2008 and has no legal standing.

Furthermore, the signature of this document on the very day of the 31st round of Geneva International Discussions creates circumstances that do not foster a constructive climate for efforts to improve the security and humanitarian situation on the ground.

We express our grave concern about the military exercises launched on 5 March by the Russian Federation in Georgia's breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South-Ossetia. These actions violate Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognised borders and contradict OSCE commitments, principles of international law and international commitments of the Russian Federation. The EU has repeatedly underlined its concern about the continued Russian military and security presence and infrastructure reinforcements in the Georgian breakaway regions. We reiterate our call on Russia to fulfil its international obligations, including with regard to providing access for humanitarian organisations and the EUMM to the breakaway regions.

We note with profound concern the potential implications of the continued deployment of fences and other obstacles at different locations along and beyond the Administrative Boundary Line.

We recall that any actions undermining the security and stability on the ground must be avoided. We encourage all participants to use the Geneva International Discussions constructively.

Our position in support of the territorial integrity of Georgia is well known. In this spirit, we remain committed to support conflict resolution in Georgia, through the EU

Monitoring Mission in Georgia, and through the Geneva International Discussions that need the active and constructive commitment of all participants on all relevant issues.

In light of recent developments we however stress once again that the Geneva International Discussions remain the best forum to address and resolve the challenges stemming from the conflict in Georgia.

The Candidate Countries TURKEY, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+ and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, as well as UKRAINE and the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania 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.