



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No 1102 Vienna, 2 June 2016

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#### **EU Statement in response to the Foreign Minister of Georgia, H.E. Mikheil Janelidze**

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The European Union warmly welcomes Foreign Minister, H.E. Mikheil Janelidze to the Permanent Council. Mr. Minister, we thank you for your comprehensive and timely address, especially keeping in mind that your country has just recently celebrated the 25th anniversary of Independence Day.

Georgia has come a long way in the last twenty-five years. Common values and democratic choice have transformed Georgia into one of the most successful Eastern partnership countries. The European Union and Georgia enjoy a strong relationship, which has been significantly enhanced through the signing of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement in 2014. The Agreement, which will enter into force on 1 July, allows us to activate the full potential of EU-Georgian relations, focusing on support to core reforms, governance and sector cooperation and to move ahead with deeper political association and economic integration, which contributes to strengthening the regional security environment, as well as serves as a driving force for the implementation of Georgia's reform agenda. This includes vital areas such as economy, rule of law and the judiciary, as well as fostering a political climate with respect for opposition and cross-party dialogue and by avoiding confrontation, especially on the eve of the 2016 parliamentary elections. Sustainable implementation of these reforms will transform and modernise Georgia, to the benefit of all its citizens.

We are pleased that our dialogue and cooperation in the field of the Common Foreign and Security Policy aiming at gradual convergence, including on the Common Security and Defence Policy, has brought our positions closer on a number of issues, including security, conflict prevention and crisis management, regional stability, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. We are ready to step up

our cooperation in the framework of the Eastern Partnership and the European Neighbourhood Policy. We are also ready to explore other areas of possible cooperation, such as cyber, counter-terrorism, anti-radicalisation, and security sector reform.

Resolution of the conflict in Georgia remains a priority for the European Union. The EUSR for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia as well as the EU Monitoring Mission are the visible and substantial signs of our commitment. We reiterate our view that the Geneva International Discussions, in their agreed format, continue to be the most important forum to address and resolve the challenges stemming from the conflict in Georgia.

We welcome the continued constructive efforts by the participants in the Ergneti Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism. The tragic fatal incident, the first such case in many years, that occurred at the Khurcha-Nabakevi crossing point on the Administrative Boundary Line of Georgia with the breakaway region of Abkhazia on 19 May, shows that the situation on the ground remains fragile. This calls for renewed efforts towards confidence and security-building measures. In this context, the holding of the extraordinary meeting of the Gali IPRM on 27 May as well as the renewed commitment to resume regular Gali IPRM meetings, is a positive step. Fully functional IPRMs are essential for confidence, predictability and transparency on the ground.

We reiterate our firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders and our concern about the continuing Russian military and security-related presence and infrastructure reinforcements in the Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In this context, we continue to believe that a clear non-use of force commitment by Russia is necessary. The European Union and its Member States call on Russia to fulfil its obligations under the ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 and its subsequent implementing measures of 8 September 2008. The European Union also calls for EUMM access to the breakaway regions.

The European Union is concerned by the recent conclusion of the so-called “Agreement on the State Border” by the Russian Federation with the breakaway region of South Ossetia. This action, together with previous so-called agreements

signed between the Russian Federation and the two Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the "treaties on Alliance and Strategic Partnership / Integration" – which include references to a transfer of powers in some areas - further violates the fundamental norms of international law, including the principles of inviolability of Georgia's sovereignty, territorial integrity and internationally recognized borders. We underline that recent statements about the possible, illegal referendum in the Georgian breakaway region of South Ossetia on accession to the Russian Federation would go against ongoing efforts to strengthen security and stability in the region and improve the humanitarian and human rights situation on the ground. We recall that the EU does not recognise the constitutional and illegal framework in which such a referendum would take place.

The inadequate information available on the human rights situation in the Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia is a cause of concern. It is of utmost importance to assist international monitors in objective and independent reporting of the human rights situation on the ground. The lack of transparency surrounding the recent adoption of so-called 'laws' on entry to and exit from the breakaway regions and on the status of foreign residents there, creates uncertainty for the conflict-affected population.

We remain convinced, that there is an 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.

In conclusion, we thank you once again for sharing your views with us today. We wish you every success in the future and for your country - unity and consolidation as it walks down the path of its choice, building a prosperous, secure European state.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country ICELAND, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

\* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.