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EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No. 1239
Vienna, 5 September 2019**

**EU statement in reply to the current issue raised by
Georgia**

The European Union thanks Georgia for its timely statement. We regret that recent developments along the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) have negatively impacted the overall security situation. The European Union is actively engaged with the recent highly concerning occurrences in the Gugutiantkari and Chorchana/Tsnelisi areas. The erection of fences by the de-facto authorities of South Ossetia backed by Russian border guards hinders the freedom of movement of the local population and deprives them from access to orchards and water resources, which are key to their livelihood. Such activities must stop immediately, and we urge the Russian Federation to engage in reversing them.

We call on all relevant actors to continue using all existing mechanisms of communication, including the EU Monitoring Mission's hotline and the IPRMs. Dialogue to lower tensions and to address the challenges of the conflict-affected population is vital. In this context, we welcome the work in the Ergneti IPRM, and urge the resumption of the activities of the Gali IPRM without preconditions and further delay.

It is troubling that the human rights and humanitarian situation in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia continues to deteriorate. Actively pursued "borderization", increased military presence, continuous restrictions at the crossing points at the Administrative Boundary Line, unresolved issues of documentation that affect ethnic Georgians, pushing mother-tongue education out of Georgian schools,

continuing arbitrary detentions, and obstacles to the rights of displaced persons require further efforts. The European Union renews its call on the Russian Federation and the de-facto authorities to reverse these trends. We reiterate our concern about the death of Georgian citizen Mr. Kvaratskhelia in the custody of Russian Federation Border Guards in the Gali district and call on the Russian Federation to ensure that there is swift investigation and full transparency on the circumstances of this tragic incident. The European Union is also concerned about the impunity surrounding the fatal incidents of Georgian citizens Messrs. Tatunashvili in 2018 and Otkhozoria in 2016, and we reiterate our call for a thorough investigation into these cases, as well as into the case of Mr. Basharuli in 2014, to ensure justice and accountability.

We reiterate that the European Union does not recognize the constitutional and legal framework in which the so-called “presidential elections” took place on August 25 in the Georgian region of Abkhazia, with a second round foreseen on September 8. Similarly, we do not recognize the legitimacy of the so-called “parliamentary elections” held in Georgia’s South Ossetia region on June 9. The decisions by the de facto authorities in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia/Tskhinvali to conduct the so-called “elections” go against the continuing efforts to peaceful resolution of the conflict in Georgia.

This year marks the 11th anniversary of the conflict between Russia and Georgia, which unfortunately still remains unresolved. The European Union expresses its unwavering commitment to a peaceful resolution of this conflict in line with OSCE principles and commitments and the fundamental norms of international law. We remain engaged through the EU Special Representative and its co-chairmanship of the Geneva International Discussions, and through the work of the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia. The EUMM remains the only international presence on the ground, which tirelessly keeps contributing to stabilization, normalization and confidence building between the conflict parties.

We reiterate our firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. The European Union calls 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 access for the EUMM to the whole territory of Georgia, including the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as per its mandate, as well as for human rights monitoring mechanisms, humanitarian and other civil society organizations.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.