



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No. 1244 Vienna, 17 October 2019

## EU Statement on the 49<sup>th</sup> round of the Geneva International Discussions

### FINAL DRAFT (783 words)

The European Union reiterates its strong support for the Geneva International Discussions (GID), the latest round of which took place on 8-9 October. The GID remain a unique mechanism, engaging all stakeholders in addressing the challenges stemming from the unresolved conflict in Georgia. The European Union is actively engaged in conflict resolution efforts through the EU Special Representative and other Co-Chairs of the GID, and through the work of the EU monitoring mission in Georgia (EUMM).

We regret that the discussions at the 49th GID round were overshadowed by the worrisome developments since August 2019 along the South Ossetian administrative boundary line (ABL) in the Chorchana-Tsnelisi area, which are causing an increase of tensions. Thanks to the considerable conflict management efforts put forward by the EUMM as well as by the GID Co-Chairs, the situation did not deteriorate further and dialogue could continue further. The EUMM remains the only international presence on the ground, which tirelessly contributes to stabilisation, normalisation and confidence building between the conflict parties. We welcome the continuous efforts undertaken in Ergneti IPRM, which help ease tensions. We call for these efforts to continue. At the same time, we regret that the activities of Gali IPRM keep being stalled for more than one year and urge the resumption of its work without preconditions and further delay.

The European Union notes the extensive debates on non-use of force and international security arrangements. We encourage further efforts in this direction and continue to believe that a clear non-use of force statement by Russia is essential to enhance security, help build confidence and provide space for further political

dialogue. We are concerned that Russia continues to violate Georgian sovereignty and territorial integrity through its military presence, infrastructure reinforcements, military exercises, and further build-up in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and we call on Russia to revert these trends.

We regret that the discussions on humanitarian issues took place in a rather difficult atmosphere. We are deeply concerned about the ongoing restrictions to freedom of movement on the conflict-affected population, including through the “borderization” process, closures of crossing points and continuing arbitrary detentions. While we note the recent lifting of crossing restrictions imposed at the Abkhaz ABL, we stress the need to reopen all crossing points along the South Ossetian ABL. Another cause for our concern is continuous pushing of mother-tongue education out of Georgian schools, as well as unresolved issue of documentation that affects ethnic Georgians in Gali region. We deplore such activities and urge the Russian Federation to actively engage in reversing them.

As regards the fatal cases of Georgian citizens Messrs. Kvaratskhelia, Tatumashvili, Otkhazia and Basharuli, we reiterate our call for thorough investigations into these and other cases and for justice to be ensured. It is of utmost importance to avoid impunity, as such unresolved tragic incidents contribute to growing confrontation and mistrust.

We regret that once again the Russian, Abkhaz and South Ossetian participants walked out from the discussion under the key agenda item dedicated to the issue of IDPs and refugees. We call upon all participants to engage on all agenda items and refrain from walkouts which contradict the commitments to the GID made by the participants concerned.

On a more positive note, we appreciate the initiative to hold an information session on the best practices for managing the communicable diseases. It is encouraging that all participants expressed full support to past and ongoing steps to manage environmental pests. We also positively note discussions on missing persons, cultural heritage, and efforts to incorporate women’s voices into the GID through the Co-Chairs-led consultations with women in the region. We believe that inclusive and meaningful participation of women is crucial in all phases of peace-building processes, including in Georgia, and we strongly encourage further exploration of

this topic within the GID. We would also encourage exploring ways to include youth into this process.

The European Union remains convinced that there is an urgent need for a meaningful cross-dimensional OSCE presence throughout Georgia. 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 EU-mediated 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 European Union looks forward to the next round of the Geneva International Discussions scheduled for 10-11 December 2019.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, 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.