



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1279 Vienna, 3 September 2020

EU Statement in reply to the Current Issue raised by Georgia

The European Union reaffirms its unwavering support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. We stand by Georgia, and by the Georgian people in their aspirations to live in a stable, peaceful, democratic and prosperous state.

This year marks the 12th anniversary of the conflict between Russia and Georgia, which unfortunately remains unresolved. The European Union expresses its firm commitment to a peaceful resolution of the conflict, in line with OSCE principles and commitments and fundamental norms of international law. In this context, we once again call 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.

Regretfully, the Russian military presence in Georgia continues together with increased military exercises and infrastructure reinforcements as well as continuous illegal acts aimed at integrating the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia into Russia's regulatory and security space. These steps run contrary to the principles of international law and commitments undertaken by Russia, including in the EU-mediated 2008 ceasefire agreement and its implementing measures, and must be reversed.

The European Union remains deeply concerned about the continuous deterioration of the human rights and humanitarian situation in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The ongoing violations of the freedom of movement, including through the actively pursued so-called "borderization" process and the closure of Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) crossing points, severely impact the security, safety and well-being of the local population. As a result, since September 2019, these movement restrictions have led to a totally unjustifiable loss of more than a dozen human lives of patients to be transferred across the Administrative Boundary Lines were not able to receive medical care, and have lost their

lives. We are also deeply concerned by the continued arbitrary detentions, restrictions of property rights, ethnic discrimination of Georgians residing in Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions, including the removal of mother tongue education from Georgian schools, as well as by the imposition of severe obstacles to the rights of displaced persons. The European Union renews its call on the Russian Federation to stop such actions and to reverse all these negative trends. We reiterate our call for thorough investigations into the fatal cases of Georgian citizens Messrs. I. Kvaratskhelia, A. Tatumashvili, G. Otkhazia, D. Basharuli and other cases in order for justice to be ensured and impunity avoided.

The European Union remains engaged and directly involved in stabilisation and conflict resolution efforts in Georgia, including through our continued engagement as a co-chair in the Geneva International Discussions (GID), our involvement in the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRMs) and the continued presence on the ground of the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM). We urge the Russian Federation to remove any obstacles to the work of the EUMM and to provide the EUMM access to the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as per its mandate which covers the whole territory of Georgia.

The European Union welcomes the resumption of the Ergneti IPRM on July 30, 2020, and urges for the immediate and unconditional resumption of IPRM meetings in Gali. These mechanisms as well as a dialogue to lower tensions and to address the challenges of the conflict-affected population are vital in order to build trust and confidence, thus contributing to a durable and sustainable solution of the conflict.

Finally, the European Union commends Georgia for its Peace Initiative: "A Step to a Better Future", which provides benefits to citizens living on both sides of the Administrative Boundary Lines by facilitating trade, education and mobility, and fosters confidence building among the divided communities.

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 ANDORRA align themselves with this statement.

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