



1226th Meeting of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

Strasbourg, 29 April 2015

EU Statement on the Secretary General's eleventh consolidated report
on the conflict in Georgia

The EU thanks the Secretary General and welcomes his eleventh consolidated report on the conflict in Georgia and looks forward to his next report expected for November 2015. The EU welcomes the fact that this issue remains high on the political agenda of the Council of Europe.

The EU reiterates its firm support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders and reiterates its concern about the continuing Russian military and security related presence and infrastructure reinforcements in the Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The EU condemned the signature by the Russian Federation of so-called “treaties” with Georgia’s breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Those “treaties” are yet another step that goes against ongoing efforts to strengthen security and stability in the region and clearly violate Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, principles of international law and the international commitments taken by the Russian Federation, including those undertaken within the Council of Europe.

The EU reiterates its strong support for the Geneva International Discussions as the essential forum for discussing and resolving challenges stemming from the conflict in Georgia. The EU calls on the participants in the Geneva International Discussion to continue working together towards sustainable security arrangements. The EU regrets that the longstanding contradictions continued to hamper progress on the key agenda items on the non-use of force and the safe and dignified return of IDPs. The EU continues to believe that a clear commitment by Russia on non-use of force is necessary.

The EU also calls on Russia to fulfil its international obligations, including full implementation of the ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 and of the 8 September Implementing Measures of the six-point agreement and providing the EU Monitoring Mission with access to the breakaway regions. The EUMM has been an important stabilising instrument, but without the access to the Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia the Mission cannot fully implement its mandate of contributing to stabilisation, normalisation and confidence building.

The EU calls on all the concerned parties to facilitate and grant unrestricted access to the international community, including the Council of Europe, for the benefit of all persons affected

by the conflict and in need of human rights protection, and expresses its concern at the human rights situation in the Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Council of Europe should be able to fully and effectively use its instruments to ensure monitoring of the human rights situation in the Georgian breakaway regions, including through visit of the Human Rights Commissioner.

The EU also notes with concern that the continuation, and in some areas even the intensification of the installation of fences and other physical obstacles exacerbates the problems of the local populations by creating obstacles along the Administrative Boundary Lines (ABL) and hindering freedom of movement and people-to-people contacts. Alongside, the EU is worried about the potential implications of the possible closure of crossing points along the Abkhaz ABL. The enforcement of the new crossing regime imposed by the *de facto* authorities of South Ossetia would potentially imply loss of access to Akhgori for the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) population. In this context we reiterate our call to ensure full exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of movement across the ABLs.

The EU remains deeply concerned by the fact that the delegation of the Council of Europe once again could not obtain authorisation by the respective *de facto* authorities to visit Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the course of preparing this report, and encourages the SG to pursue his efforts in view of fact-finding visits to those regions.

The EU underlines the importance of the right of refugees and IDPs to a safe, dignified and voluntary return. The EU welcomes the efforts by the Georgian government to provide durable housing solutions, access to livelihoods and financial assistance to the IDPs, and in particular the new Action Plan on IDPs for the period 2015 -2016 approved in January to ensure harmonisation of government's policy with the revised Law on IDPs. . The EU reiterates its commitment to help improve the situation of Internally Displaced Persons and refugees from the conflicts and their unconditional right to a safe and dignified return.

The EU welcomes outreach and engagement efforts of the Georgian government towards the *de facto* authorities and populations in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and encourages their further development including through the positive and constructive co-operation between the Council of Europe and the Georgian authorities in implementing confidence building measures and encourages further efforts in this respect.

The Countries ALBANIA, GEORGIA, ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN, THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, MONTENEGRO, NORWAY, SAN MARINO, THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA, TURKEY and UKRAINE align themselves with this statement.