



**EU Statement on the Secretary General's 12th Consolidated report on the conflict in
Georgia**

1239th Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Meeting - 4 November 2015

The EU thanks the Secretary General and welcomes his twelfth consolidated report on the conflict in Georgia and looks forward to his next report expected for April 2016. The EU considers it is extremely important to keep this issue high on the political agenda of the CoE and encourages the Secretary General to continue the submission of his biannual consolidated reports to the Committee of Ministers covering, *inter alia*, the question of human rights protection in the areas affected by the conflict in Georgia.

The EU remains highly committed to support peace-building and conflict resolution in Georgia, including through its co-chairmanship of the Geneva International Discussions and the EU Monitoring Mission on the ground.

The EU notes with approval that, as the consolidated report underlines, the 32nd round of Geneva International Discussions that took place on 30 June-1 July was assessed as “constructive and frank, despite diverging views and a challenging context”, reflecting an “increasingly proactive agenda”.

The EU expresses concern about continued deployment of so-called border signs, fences and other obstacles at different locations along the Administrative Boundary Lines. These activities are in breach of international law and create significant impediments for people on the ground, depriving them from fundamental rights, including freedom of movement and property rights. The EU recalls that provocative steps must be avoided, as must action that is detrimental to ongoing efforts to stabilise the situation. We call for a removal of the fences and other obstacles to the freedom of movement. .

The EU condemns the continued implementation of the so-called “Treaty on alliance and strategic partnership between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Abkhazia” and the “Treaty on alliance and integration between the Russian Federation and the Republic of South Ossetia”. Such processes go against ongoing efforts to strengthen security and stability in the region. The ongoing preparation and adoption of the relevant sub-agreements in various areas violate Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and contradict principles of international law and the international commitments of the Russian Federation, including those undertaken within the CoE.

The EU notes that to date limited progress has been made in the Geneva International Discussions on a possible joint statement on non-use of force. This is essential for achieving progress on international security arrangements in the region. In this regard the EU continues to believe that a clear commitment by the Russian Federation on non-use of force is necessary.

The EU regrets that no progress has been achieved on Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees, which is at the core of the mandate of the Geneva International Discussions.

We welcome the efforts by the Georgian government to provide durable and sustainable housing solutions, access to livelihoods and financial assistance to the IDPs, and the new Action Plan on IDPs for the period 2015-2016 to ensure harmonisation of government's policy with the revised Law on IDPs.

The EU regrets that the Abkhaz and South Ossetian *de facto* authorities once again did not allow the delegation of the CoE to visit the areas in the course of preparing this report, and it encourages the Secretary General to pursue his efforts in view of fact-finding visits. The EU calls on all the concerned parties to facilitate access to Abkhazia and South Ossetia for the CoE Human Rights Commissioner, including during his upcoming visit to Georgia. The CoE should be able to fully and effectively use its instruments to ensure monitoring of the human rights situation in all conflict affected areas and for the benefit of all persons in need of human rights protection. No obstacles should be created to the work of international partners in this field.

The EU expresses its concern at reports on a deterioration of the human rights situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, including with regards to freedom of movement and access to education. The EU is also concerned by changes to the language of instruction from Georgian to Russian in 11 formerly Georgian-language schools in Gali district. We join the efforts of the Co-Chairs of Geneva International Discussions to promote understanding and respect for the universal right to education of the child.

The EU strongly support all ongoing and planned confidence-building activities of the CoE, which are complementary to the efforts of the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions and which represent unique opportunities to bring together civil society members of all parties involved as it happened in Segovia (27-30 April) and Istanbul (9-11 July).

However, it is regrettable that the South Ossetian participants to a recent language training seminar at the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz, which was to start today, have not been allowed to leave the area, and therefore the seminar had to be cancelled at short notice.

The EU welcomes the initiative by the Georgian government to develop a new and more proactive approach to engagement, which would include proposals aimed at restoring ties and people to people contacts across the Administrative Boundary Lines..

The EU reaffirms its firm support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders and reiterates its concern about the continuing Russian military and security related presence, increased military exercises and infrastructure reinforcements in the Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The EU calls on the Russian Federation to fully implement the ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 and the 8 September Implementing Measures of the six-point agreement and to provide the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM) with access to the breakaway regions.

The countries ALBANIA, ANDORRA, BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, GEORGIA, ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, MONACO, MONTENEGRO, NORWAY, SAN MARINO, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA, TURKEY and UKRAINE align themselves with this statement.