



EUROPEAN UNION

Delegation of the European Union to the Council of Europe

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

The EU thanks the Secretary General and welcomes his seventh consolidated report on the conflict in Georgia and looks forward to his next report expected for November 2013. The EU welcomes the fact that this issue remains high on the political agenda of the Council of Europe. The EU notes that the report covers the period between October 2012 and March 2013, following the Parliamentary elections on 1st October which resulted in a change of government. The EU actively discusses Georgia's policy towards its breakaway regions with the Georgian government. The EU strongly welcomes the resumption of a dialogue between the Georgian and Russian authorities, which can contribute to good neighbourly relations.

The EU reiterates its firm support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders.

The EU urges both Russia and Georgia to fulfil their international commitments and obligations, including those undertaken when joining the Council of Europe. The EU calls on the participants in the Geneva International Discussion to the conflict to continue to work together towards sustainable security arrangements. In this regards, a clear non-use of force commitment by Russia is deemed necessary.

The EU also calls for the full implementation of the ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 and of the 8 September Implementing Measures of the six-point agreement, including providing the EU Monitoring Mission with access to the breakaway regions. The EUMM has been an important stabilising instrument, but without access 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. The EU also notes with concern the ongoing activities of "borderization" along the ABLs.

The EU is concerned by the fact that in addition to being denied access to South Ossetia by the de facto authorities, for the second time the Council of Europe has not been allowed to enter the territory of Abkhazia in the course of preparing this report, and encourages the SG to pursue his efforts in view of fact-finding visits to Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The EU underlines the importance of the right of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons to a safe, dignified and voluntary return. The EU encourages the development in Georgia of a general strategy on the reduction of poverty and prevention of social exclusion in cooperation with the Council of Europe.

The EU welcomes initial signs of increased outreach of the Georgian government towards the de facto authorities 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. In addition, the EU calls for the resumption of IPRM for Abkhazia.

The EU's recent appointment of a Special Adviser for Legal and Constitutional Reform and Human Rights aims to facilitate dialogue in Georgia.

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The Acceding Country Croatia*, the Candidate Countries “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”*, Montenegro*, Iceland+ and Serbia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova and San Marino align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.