



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No. 1302 Vienna, 11 February 2021

#### **EU Statement in response to the Current Issue raised by Georgia**

Madam Chair, the European Union thanks the delegation of Georgia for raising this Current Issue.

The EU is deeply concerned about the fact that on 5 February 2021 the de facto authorities in the Georgian region of South Ossetia extended the illegal detention of Georgian citizen Mr Zaza Gakheladze for a further twelve-and-a-half years. We recall that Mr Gakheladze was shot and captured at the Administrative Boundary Line between the Tbilisi Administered territories and the Georgian region of South Ossetia on 11 July 2020, and has been kept in detention since then.

The European Union joins Georgia and other international partners in their call for the immediate and unconditional release of Mr Gakheladze, as well as of all other Georgian citizens illegally detained for similar motives.

Since the very first day of the illegal detention of Mr Gakheladze, the EU has been urging his prompt release, including through the EU Monitoring Mission's managed Hotline, within the framework of the Ergneti Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) and the Geneva International Discussions. We will continue to use these frameworks in addressing the human rights and security situation of the conflict affected communities living alongside the Administrative Boundary Lines in Georgia. We also urge Russia and the de facto authorities it backs to refrain from any new provocative steps which could further escalate the already fragile security and humanitarian situation on the ground.

In this context, the European Union also reminds the Russian Federation of its responsibilities in line with the judgment of 21 January 2021 of the European Court of Human Rights in the case Georgia vs Russia.

The EU reiterates its unwavering support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. The EU urges Russia to fulfil its obligations under the EU-mediated ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 and its subsequent implementing measures of 8 September 2008. We reiterate our call for access for the EUMM to the whole territory of Georgia, including the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as for human rights monitoring mechanisms, humanitarian and other civil society organizations.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\*, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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