



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1296 Vienna, 17 December 2020

EU Statement on the 51st round of the Geneva International Discussions

The European Union welcomes the resumption of in-person meetings of the Geneva International Discussions (GID) and the 51st round of which took place on 10-11 December. This was the only GID meeting in 2020, exactly one year since the previous round was held. We wish to commend GID Co-Chairs for their tireless efforts in maintaining close contacts with the sides of the conflict throughout this year and for making this in-person meeting possible.

GID remains a unique mechanism that engages all stakeholders in addressing numerous challenges stemming from the unresolved conflict in Georgia. We therefore take positive note of the fact that last week all GID participants reconfirmed their commitment to the GID process. We expect GID in-person meetings to continue in 2021, in accordance with the established practice and their standard frequency.

Regular GID meetings are critical to address security issues, to prevent incidents and to respond to pressing humanitarian needs of the local population. We regret that discussions on core issues – security and stability, as well as humanitarian issues – remain challenging. We continue to believe that the implementation of the obligations under the EU-mediated ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 and its Implementing Measures remain essential.

The European Union is concerned about the most recent adoption of the programme on creation of a common socio-economic space between Georgia's region of Abkhazia and the Russian Federation, aiming at further intensification of de facto integration of a significant part of Georgia's territory into Russia. We are following these developments closely and assessing their implications.

The EU once again underlines its deep concern about the continuous deterioration of the human rights situation in Georgia's regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The ongoing violations of the freedom of movement, including through the continued closure of the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) crossing points, severely impact the security, safety and well-being of the local population.

The EU also remains deeply concerned about the continued arbitrary detentions, restrictions of property rights and discrimination of ethnic Georgians, including the removal of mother tongue education, as well as of the imposition of severe obstacles to the rights of displaced persons. We reiterate our call for thorough investigations into the fatal cases of the Georgian citizens while in arbitrary detention in Georgia's regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

We regret the GID discussion on the issues of IDPs and refugees was again disrupted due to a walkout of Russian, Abkhaz and South Ossetian participants. We call on the GID representatives to discuss these important topics, which are other core issues of the GID talks.

The Covid-19 pandemic should serve as an incentive for cooperation. We therefore welcome the GID discussions on concrete positive steps taken to jointly address COVID19-related challenges and to help people living in Georgia's region of Abkhazia, including through the creation of humanitarian corridors. We call for similar steps to be also taken with regard to the population of Georgia's region of South Ossetia.

The EU welcomes the resumption of the Ergneti IPRM. We call for the immediate and unconditional resumption of the Gali IPRM and that it be conducted in line with the established rules. Sincere dialogue is needed in order to build trust and confidence and to significantly contribute to a future durable and sustainable solution of the conflict.

The European Union is and will remain actively engaged in conflict resolution efforts through the EU Special Representative and his co-chairmanship of the GID, and through the work of the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM), which remains the only international presence on the ground.

The European Union remains convinced that there is an urgent need for a meaningful cross-dimensional OSCE presence throughout Georgia. We reiterate our firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. The European Union also calls for access for the EUMM to the whole territory of Georgia, including its regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as per its mandate, as well as for human rights monitoring mechanisms, humanitarian and other civil society organizations.

The European Union looks forward to the next round of the Geneva International Discussions scheduled for 23-24 March, 2021.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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