

Information Documents

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**Consolidated report on the conflict in Georgia
(April – October 2022)**

Introduction

1. At their 1080th meeting on 24 and 26 March 2010, the Ministers' Deputies took the following decision: "The Deputies, restating the previous decisions of the Committee of Ministers, invited the Secretary General to prepare his consolidated report on the conflict in Georgia based on his outline and taking into account the comments made during the present meeting".

2. It is recalled that the objective of the report is to take stock of the situation in Georgia following the armed conflict between the Russian Federation and Georgia in August 2008, to report on the related activities of the Council of Europe and to propose further Council of Europe action. The report is composed of four parts:

- update on major developments in the period under review;
- assessment of statutory obligations and commitments related to the conflict and its consequences;
- the human rights situation in the areas affected by the conflict; and
- current Council of Europe activities aimed at addressing the consequences of the conflict, their follow-up and proposals for future action.

3. This 26th consolidated report covers the period between April and October 2022. It notably builds on the previous consolidated reports and on the related decisions by the Deputies.

4. A delegation of the Secretariat carried out a fact-finding visit to Tbilisi on 19 - 21 September 2022 and had the opportunity to discuss the situation with the Georgian authorities, as well as with representatives of international organisations and the expert community. The Secretariat wishes to express its gratitude to the Georgian authorities for their support in organising the visit and to all interlocutors for their assistance and valuable contributions.

5. The Secretary General intends to pursue her efforts in view of fact-finding visits to the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia for the preparation of future consolidated reports. In the period under review, the Secretariat and experts continued to have contacts for the purpose of the implementation of Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) (cf. Section IV.1).

6. This report does not replace the monitoring procedures established in the Council of Europe. Nor should it be seen as prejudging any possible decisions in the cases related to the conflict and its consequences at the European Court of Human Rights.

7. It is a fundamental objective of the member states of the Council of Europe to uphold the territorial integrity of Georgia. It is to be reminded that in their successive decisions, the Deputies reiterated their unequivocal support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders.¹ The Deputies have called upon the Russian Federation to stop and reverse illegal processes and to comply with its international obligations and commitments. Nothing in this report should be interpreted as being contrary to the full respect of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders.

¹ CM/Del/Dec(2022)1433/2.1 (latest decision of the Ministers' Deputies of 4 May 2022).

8. This report does not prejudice or infringe upon a possible future political settlement of the conflict within the framework of the Geneva International Discussions (GID), nor the implementation of the six-point Ceasefire Agreement of 12 August 2008 between the Russian Federation and Georgia under the auspices of the European Union, and the implementing measures of 8 September 2008.

I Update on major developments in the period under review

9. On 30 May 2022, the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussion made a statement to announce that they were undertaking a round of consultations with all GID participants. These consultations were primarily aimed at exchanging views on recent developments related to security and humanitarian issues on the ground. The consultations also focused on the timing and modalities of the next GID round.²

10. The 56th round of the GID was held on 5 October 2022. The Co-Chairs welcomed the holding of the round in Geneva and reiterated their appreciation of the participants' commitment to the format. As mandated by the Six-point Agreement of 12 August 2008 and the implementing measures of 8 September 2008, the GID continues to serve as the only platform where the consequences of the conflict are addressed, and other important issues are discussed.³

11. The Georgian Government conveyed to the delegation its deep concern with respect to the preparation of a so-called transfer of the Bichvinta estate in Abkhazia, Georgia, to the Russian Federation on a 49-year lease. A reported 180 hectares of land, including its buildings and structures, would be transferred to the Federal Protective Service of the Russian Federation in the event of the "ratification" of the "agreement".

12. The Georgian Government strongly condemned the "agreement" between the Russian Federation and Abkhazia, Georgia on simplified procedures for receiving dual (Russian) citizenship. This "agreement" was reportedly signed in September 2022.

13. Since the last reporting period, so-called "parliamentary elections" were held in the Georgian region of Abkhazia on 12 March 2022, as were so-called "presidential elections" in Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia, on 10 April 2022.

14. The Georgian authorities condemned proposed plans announced in Tskhinvali region/ South Ossetia, Georgia, to hold a "referendum" on joining the Russian Federation. The proposed date of 17 July 2022 for the "referendum" was postponed and plans paused after the so-called "presidential elections" of April 2022.

II Assessment of statutory obligations and commitments related to the conflict and its consequences

15. Below is an update on statutory obligations and specific commitments – as listed in Parliamentary Assembly Opinions 193 (1996) and 209 (1999) – which have been selected for the purpose of reporting on the conflict in Georgia and its consequences. This part builds on Part 1 of the first and second consolidated reports on the conflict in Georgia ([SG/Inf\(2010\)8](#) and [SG/Inf\(2010\)19-final](#)).

² Press communiqué of the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions, 30 May 2022.

³ Press communiqué of the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions, 5 October 2022.

- i. *To accept the principles of the rule of law and of the enjoyment by all persons within its jurisdiction of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to collaborate sincerely and effectively in the realisation of the aim of the Council of Europe.*
- ii. *To settle international as well as internal disputes by peaceful means (an obligation incumbent upon all member states of the Council of Europe), rejecting resolutely any forms of threats of force against its neighbours.*

16. During the reporting period the Georgian Government reiterated its commitment to peace and continued its efforts aimed at creating a new strategic approach while working on policy review of its engagement strategy. The delegation was informed that the elaboration of the “State Strategy for De-Occupation and Peaceful Conflict Resolution” and the strategic review of the 2010 Engagement Strategy and its Action Plan were ongoing.

17. As reported previously, the European Court of Human Rights delivered its judgment on the merits on 21 January 2021 in the inter-State application (II) No. 38263/08 *Georgia v. Russia* concerning the armed conflict between Georgia and the Russian Federation in 2008 and its consequences. The Deputies recalled in their decision of 4 May 2022 that the judgment established the responsibility of the Russian Federation for grave human rights violations during the period of occupation of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia following the August 2008 war as the State exercising effective control over those regions including the killing, torture, ill-treatment and arbitrary detention of Georgian civilians and military personnel, the looting and burning of Georgian homes, the inhuman treatment of Georgians targeted as an ethnic group, and the deprivation of the right of IDPs and refugees to return to their homes.⁴ The question of the application of Article 41 of the Convention has been reserved.⁵ The Government of Georgia submitted its observations under Article 41 of the Convention in January 2022, accompanied by the list of victims.

18. The Committee of Ministers examined the case of *Georgia v. Russia* (II) for the first time at its 1436th meeting (June 2022) (DH) and subsequently at its 1443rd meeting (September 2022) (DH). In its decisions at its 1436th and 1443rd meetings, the Committee recalled the scale and nature of the violations found, and reaffirmed the Russian Federation’s unequivocal obligation to implement all the measures for the purposes of execution of the judgment notwithstanding its cessation of membership of the Council of Europe. The Committee underlined the necessity for the respondent state to take urgent and tangible measures to ensure cessation, as well as elimination of the root cause of these violations and to avoid their repetition. The Committee urged again the authorities of the Russian Federation to submit to the Committee of Ministers a thorough and comprehensive action plan in this regard.⁶

19. Regarding the pending inter-state application (IV) 39611/18 lodged in August 2018, the proceedings were resumed on 25 May 2021, and the parties were invited to submit written observations on the admissibility of the application, which were transmitted to the Court between December 2021 and February 2022. The examination of the latter case is thus currently pending before the Court at its admissibility stage.

⁴ CM/Del/Dec(2022)1433/2.1.

⁵ European Court of Human Rights, Press Release, Grand Chamber judgment in the case *Georgia v. Russia* (II), 21 January 2021. <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=003-6913071-9285190>.

⁶ CM/Del/Dec(2022)1443/H-46-25.

20. The investigation authorised by the International Criminal Court in January 2016 into the *Situation in Georgia* covering the period from 1 July 2008 to 10 October 2008, for war crimes and crimes against humanity allegedly committed in and around the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia, is ongoing. On 24 June 2022, Pre-Trial Chamber I of the International Criminal Court issued the public redacted versions of arrest warrants for three individuals. Pre-Trial Chamber I considered that there were reasonable grounds that each of the suspects bears responsibility for war crimes.⁷ The ICC Prosecutor had filed on 10 March 2022 an application for arrest warrants in relation to these three individuals from the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia, with the application focused specifically on unlawful confinement, ill-treatment, hostage taking and subsequent unlawful transfer of ethnic Georgian civilians in the context of an occupation by the Russian Federation.⁸

- iii. *To respect strictly the provisions of international humanitarian law, including in cases of armed conflict on its territory.*
- iv. *To co-operate in good faith with international humanitarian organisations and to enable them to carry out their activities on its territory in conformity with their mandates.*
- v. *To facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to the most vulnerable groups of the population affected by the consequences of the conflict.*

21. The delegation was informed that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has continued its activities in support of efforts aimed at clarifying the fate and whereabouts of persons unaccounted for as a result of the armed conflicts and at supporting their families. The ICRC continues to collect and analyse available data for the identification of missing persons, and conducted forensic capacity-building activities. Technical working groups between experts from the Georgian authorities and the ICRC were launched in May and June 2022 to facilitate a gradual handover of certain tasks currently undertaken by ICRC to the Georgian authorities.

22. Visits to so-called “penitentiary structures” through the reporting period were continued by the ICRC, in order to assess and strengthen access to basic needs, establish family contact where needed, and to secure humane treatment and conditions of detention.

23. ICRC representatives conveyed to the delegation that the ICRC had continued to undertake a range of further activities to support the humanitarian response to challenges caused by the pandemic, including the provision of basic psychological support and information related to covid-19 and vaccination programmes to families of missing persons. The ICRC also continued to undertake a range of activities including supporting families separated by ABLs to establish and maintain contacts, and the facilitation of the reunification of families across ABLs.

24. Humanitarian activities were maintained by international humanitarian organisations on the response to the covid-19 pandemic and its impact on the affected populations. The delegation was informed that these activities were being reduced in light of lower case numbers throughout the reporting period.

⁷ ICC, Press release, 30 June 2022.

⁸ ICC, Office of the Prosecutor, Statement, 10 March 2022.

25. The delegation was informed by its international interlocutors that, on the Georgian controlled territory, international organisations have continued to cater to the basic needs of people along the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL). Medical supplies, protective equipment and training to local healthcare facilities have been provided along the ABL.

26. In meetings with representatives of the international community, it was reported that, in the Georgian region of Abkhazia, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the ICRC had provided financial and food assistance to the most vulnerable segments of the population, including isolated, older persons; worked to improve sanitation and hygiene in so-called “penitentiary structures”; and delivered guidance and material assistance to healthcare, laboratory and/or forensic facilities. The Liaison Mechanism, established within the Georgian Government’s Engagement Action Plan and operating under the aegis of the UNDP (financed by the EU), also continued to facilitate, *inter alia* the delivery of various types of humanitarian and medical aid. All interlocutors underlined to the delegation the importance of continuing co-operation activities. The Georgian Government reiterated concerns about restrictive measures taken in the Georgian region of Abkhazia that hampered the activities of international organisations operating on the ground and projects aimed at fostering dialogue between communities on both sides of the ABL.

27. The delegation was informed that, despite the ongoing limitations in access, the Georgian Government had continued to mobilise and provide support to the people living in the Georgian region of Abkhazia in its response to the covid-19 related challenges by way of delivering material assistance, raising awareness, sharing medical experience and expertise (doctor-to-doctor co-operation), facilitating the intervention of relevant international agencies, and ensuring the provision of vaccines on the Georgian controlled territory without prior registration. Medical evacuations and treatment of covid-19 patients have also continued (cf. section on the humanitarian situation in Abkhazia, Georgia).

28. As regards Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia, access for international engagement has remained limited to the ICRC throughout the reporting period. It provided assistance targeting healthcare and forensic facilities, so-called “penitentiary structures”, and older vulnerable people. It has also provided personal protective equipment and medical equipment for health structures in the region. The ICRC informed the delegation that it had continued to facilitate medical evacuations including the transfer of patients from the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia, as well as the supply of orthopaedic assistance to vulnerable persons in the region. The Georgian Government assessed that overall access of humanitarian organisations is denied by the Russian Federation.

29. The delegation was informed that the Georgian Government had also offered humanitarian assistance to people living in the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia, but no proposal had been accepted and was informed by the Georgian Government of continuing concerns about the facilitation of timely medical evacuations to the Georgian controlled territory.

30. Representatives of the Georgian Government have reiterated that their priority was to assist the conflict-affected populations as much as possible.

31. The delegation was informed that the Georgian Government continues to make available free access to healthcare, education and other social benefits for all residents of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia. Post-secondary education preparation programmes envisaged by the peace initiative “A Step to a Better Future” provided support to facilitate the enrolment of students in the higher education institutions of Georgian-controlled territory. The delegation was informed that in 2022, an absolute majority of the graduates (230) from the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, were admitted to the higher education institutions of Georgia without any exams or preparation programmes. In the field of healthcare, the state referral programme continued to be implemented, while vaccines, diagnostic tests, and pharmaceuticals products have been put at the disposal of the conflict-affected populations throughout the reporting period (*inter alia* with the facilitation of international partners).

32. The delegation was informed by the Georgian Government that, in the framework of the implementation of the peace initiative “A Step for a better future”, the Peace Fund was fully operational with contributions from international partners and was providing financing for a number of cross-ABL projects in the area of trade, with the third call for grant programme (released in early 2022) seeing a continued growth in applications.

III Human rights situation in the areas affected by the conflict

33. Representatives of the Georgian authorities met by the delegation in Tbilisi pointed to the continued trend along the ABL of illegal so-called “borderisation” processes, illegal detentions and unresolved cases, which on the whole contributes to the escalation of the situation on the ground and represents a further impediment and violation of the freedom of movement. The Georgian Government stressed the importance of ensuring the opening of “crossing points” without any hindrances.

34. The delegation was informed that the human rights and humanitarian situation of the conflict-affected communities continued to be affected by restrictions on freedom of movement, documentation issues, and obstacles on access to basic services. Openings of “crossing points” were observed through the reporting period. These openings were accompanied by continued impediments related to documentation issues (cf. below). The Georgian Government shared the view that all impediments to the full opening of “crossing points” serve a discriminatory purpose against ethnic Georgians.

35. The Georgian authorities continued to express concern about the state of monuments of cultural, historical and religious heritage located in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia.

36. The delegation was in particular informed that no progress had been achieved on the investigation demanded by the Georgian authorities into the deaths of Giga Otkhordia, David Basharuli and Archil Tatumashvili, nor regarding the deaths of Irakli Kvaratskhelia and Inal Jabiev.

III.1 Reports on Abkhazia, Georgia

III.1.i Security

37. No IPRM meetings were held during the period under review. The meetings have remained suspended for over four years. The importance of resuming them has been stressed by international actors and the Georgian Government. The EUMM-facilitated hotline continues to operate.

38. The delegation was informed that illegal so-called “borderisation” activities have continued during the period under review, including the extension of fences, the installation of new surveillance equipment, and increased monitoring around “crossing points”.

III.1.ii Freedom of movement

39. The re-establishment of regular cross-ABL traffic of 5 July 2021 continued through the reporting period. The Georgian authorities conveyed to the delegation that the need for so-called “resident permits” for persons living in Gali continued to have had implications on freedom of movement for the populations who wish to cross to the Georgian controlled territory (cf. section on identity documents).

40. The Georgian authorities informed that illegal detentions have persisted through the reporting period, with the identification of five illegally detained persons between March and September 2022. The delegation was informed by interlocutors that those illegally detained were held in conditions which remain below minimum international standards.

41. The Georgian Government updated the delegation on the health situation of Irakli Bebuga, who was illegally sentenced to a nine-year imprisonment in December 2020. The Georgian Government stressed the need for his immediate release and alerted the delegation to the illegal detention of Kristine Takalandze who had been detained for so-called “espionage” charges since 20 July 2022

III.1.iii Humanitarian situation

42. The Georgian authorities and the international interlocutors stressed that the negative effects of the restrictions on freedom of movement continue affecting ethnic Georgian populations in the Georgian region of Abkhazia, in particular with regards to people’s access to basic rights, services and livelihoods in the territory controlled by the Georgian Government.

Means of subsistence

43. Considering the long-term socio-economic challenges, exacerbated by the covid-19 pandemic, international interlocutors stated that the continued opening of “crossing points” along the ABL had been a step forwards in improving access to pensions, benefits, affordable medicines, and trade activities.

Access to medical care

44. Pandemic-specific challenges noted in the previous report related to the provision of medical care were reported to have eased due to the stabilisation of the covid-19 pandemic through the reporting period.

45. Urgent medical evacuations and treatment of covid-19 patients have remained available during this period. The Georgian Government ensured that the patients concerned were immediately transported to hospitals in the Georgian controlled territory. Immunisation programmes for routine vaccinations were continued during the reporting period. The delegation was informed that the State Health Programme “Ambulance, Emergency and Medical Transportation” maintained its functioning.

III.1.iv Identity documents

46. The Georgian authorities informed the delegation that plans in Abkhazia, Georgia, to abolish the temporary identification document, known as “Form No. 9” continued. It was suggested that this might have implications for up to 5 000 residents in Gali, affecting in particular the ability to cross into the Tbilisi-controlled territory and impacting property rights.

47. Gaps in so-called documentation continued to have an adverse impact on the status and effective enjoyment of rights of the ethnic Georgian population living in Gali, but also in Ochamchire and Tkvarcheli. It was reported that the so-called “foreign temporary residence permits” continue to be issued and remain the only option for many ethnic Georgians, although it implies registering as so-called “foreign citizens”. The Georgian authorities conveyed to the delegation the additional restrictions this documentation imposes on ethnic Georgians in Abkhazia, Georgia, in relation to residence, work, and the exercise of property rights. Meanwhile, the Georgian Government underlined that ethnic Georgians living in Abkhazia, Georgia, refuse to own so-called “foreign temporary residence permits” as those are illegal.

48. The delegation was informed by Georgian authorities that an “agreement” on the settlement of issues of “dual citizenship” with the Russian Federation in September 2022 was reported to have been signed, which would facilitate the obtention of Russian citizenship without giving up a so-called Abkhaz “passport”.

III.1.v Access to education

49. The situation of education in the Georgian language in schools in Abkhazia, Georgia saw no progress in the provision of access to education in the native language reported. To recall, education in the Georgian language has been banned, not only at schools, but also at kindergartens in the Georgian region of Abkhazia. The existing measures are viewed by the Government of Georgia as a form of ethnic discrimination.

50. As per information provided to the delegation, restrictions on the number of hours taught in the Georgian language continued into the new academic year beginning September 2022. To recall, it has been reported that currently, in 11 schools of the Tkvarcheli and Ochamchire districts, the Georgian language and literature are not taught at all. Regarding the situation in the whole of Gali, from the 1st grade to the 11th grade, one hour per week is devoted to the Georgian language and one hour to Georgian literature. Core subjects are taught in the Russian language. Teaching in the Abkhazian language has also been reportedly reduced to between one and four hours per week.

51. Initiatives of the Georgian Ministry of Education and Science provided extra support for students in Abkhazia, Georgia, including financial assistance and training to teachers. Equally, the Georgian authorities informed the delegation that they continued to expedite enrolment in higher level education institutions on the Georgian controlled territory for students from Abkhazia, Georgia.

III.2 Reports on the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia

III.2.i Security

52. Security observers informed the delegation that although no further incursions had been reported in the Chorchana-Tsnelisi section of the ABL during the period under review, the situation nevertheless remained unresolved and conducive to tensions with the presence of armed units and the continued construction of new positions on site. It was underlined again, as on the previous occasions, that the risk of close encounters and escalation remained high. The presence of military equipment on site represented a serious danger for stability, it was stressed. The representatives of the Georgian Government also emphasised that the situation was continuing to have a severe impact on the local population, including in terms of effectively denying people of their livelihoods and/or instigating a fear of accessing their properties.

53. During the reporting period, three IPRMs were held. In the 108th IPRM of September 2022, the co-facilitators commended releases of detainees and called for a humanitarian approach to all detention cases. The co-facilitators welcomed the temporary openings of “crossing points” during the Lomisoba religious celebrations in June, and in late August. They also assessed the announcements that temporary openings of two “crossing points” would continue during the last ten days of each month until December 2022 as a positive step, reiterating their calls for the full resumption of freedom of movement across the administrative boundary line (ABL) for the benefit of local communities.⁹ Discussions were also held on issues that negatively impact the lives and livelihoods of the population living along the ABL, including access to education and continued “borderisation” activities.¹⁰

54. At the 107th IPRM of June 2022, the opening of the “crossing points” during the Easter period was noted, as was allowing the local population to visit religious sites and graveyards. Security developments at the ABL, and the situation in the Chorchana-Tsnelisi area were among the items discussed.

⁹ Press release, OSCE, 108th Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism meeting takes place in Ergneti, 23 September 2022.

¹⁰ Press release, OSCE, 108th Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism meeting takes place in Ergneti, 23 September 2022.

55. During the period under review, instances of illegal so-called “borderisation” continued at several locations, with the Georgian Government informing the delegation of 51 cases of such activities between January and September 2022. This activity included the installation/reinforcement of observation posts, as well as new fencing and so-called “border signs”.

III.2.ii Freedom of movement

56. The “crossing points” on the ABL were opened intermittently during the period under review. The temporary openings of the main “crossing point” of Mosabruni/Odzisi during religious festivals, both for Easter and the Lomisoba celebrations in June represented the first openings of the “crossing points” since September 2019. Announcements were subsequently made that temporary openings of “crossing points” would continue during the last ten days of each month until December 2022. The delegation was informed by the Georgian authorities that the use of the “crossing points” was restricted to groups of persons living adjacent to the ABL. The Ergneti “crossing point” continued to be used on an ad hoc basis for medical evacuations and urgent cases. The delegation was informed by the Georgian authorities of their continued concern at the existence of impediments for medical evacuations.

57. Incidents of illegal detentions were reported as continuing through the reporting period. According to the representatives of the Georgian Government, there have been 29 cases between March 2022 and September 2022.

58. The delegation was also informed of the ongoing illegal detention of four Georgian citizens.

III.2.iii Humanitarian situation

Means of subsistence

59. No positive trends were reported concerning the humanitarian situation in the region, especially in the Akhgori district, where the delegation was informed of particularly dire socio-economic circumstances by the Georgian authorities. Negative impacts from the extended closure of “crossing points” were reported to have continued to limit the entry of goods and food products, in addition to having hampered people’s access to pensions and other social benefits they are entitled to in the Georgian controlled territory. Temporary openings of “crossing points” have been limited to pedestrian traffic, limiting the ability to resume trade.

Access to medical care

60. Restrictions on the opening of “crossing points” on the ABL continues to impact the access of residents from the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia, to medical facilities in the Georgian controlled territory. The Georgian Government reiterated to the delegation its continued concerns about the provision of timely medical evacuations in order to enable effective medical interventions and that assistance offered by the Georgian authorities had been refused.

61. It was also reported that impediments to the freedom of movement were having an effect on the supply and levels of medicine provisions and equipment. The delegation was informed by international interlocutors of shortages of medical personnel, medicines, and modern equipment, as well as only limited and irregular deliveries of vaccines in relation to the pandemic. The Georgian authorities informed the delegation of continued concerns related to the suppression of the sale and stocking of medicines provided by the Georgian Government.

62. The delegation was informed that patients continued to be transferred to the Georgian controlled territory within the State Health Programme “Ambulance, Emergency and Medical Transportation” to receive relevant medical treatment.

III.2.iv Identity documents

63. Georgian authorities informed the delegation that “permission documents” for accessing “crossing points” for the ethnic Georgian population in Akhalkalaki remains of concern as it creates additional obstacles to the freedom of movement. Replacement documents for expired “permission documents” are reportedly to be required from 30 November 2022 for persons wishing to use the “crossing points”.

III.2.v Access to education, including teaching of/in the native language

64. No progress has been reported during the reporting period regarding the situation of education in the Georgian language in schools in the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia. Previously expressed concerns about restrictions on access to education in the native language persist. Representatives of the Georgian Government denounced the existing measures as discrimination based on ethnicity.

III.3 The situation of internally displaced persons

65. During the period under review, no progress could be reported as regards the voluntary, safe, dignified, and unhindered return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees on the basis of internationally recognised principles.

66. In the absence of conditions conducive to their return, the delegation was informed that the Georgian Government continued to provide IDPs with alternative durable solutions in terms of housing and improvement of socio-economic conditions. Representatives of the Agency for Internally Displaced Persons, Ecomigrants and Livelihood informed the delegation that, to date, over 290 000 persons, constituting more than 91 000 IDP families, have been granted IDP status.

67. The delegation was informed about various activities of the IDPs, Ecomigrants and Livelihood Agency (Agency) in 2022, which focused primarily on providing durable housing solutions and livelihood opportunities to the IDPs. Since January 2022, a further 2 669 durable housing solutions had been provided by the Georgian Government within the framework of various resettlement programmes.

68. Durable housing solutions for the totality of 2022 involved continuation of the purchase of individual houses and transferring them into private ownership of IDPs, as well as providing IDP families with accommodation in newly constructed buildings. For improving IDPs living conditions, the Agency continued to provide co-funding to condominium co-operatives in 2022, and transferring common spaces to condominium co-operatives. The Municipal Development Fund (MDF), within the framework of Municipal Infrastructure and IDP Housing Programme, financed the construction of buildings in Kutaisi, Tskaltubo and Zugdidi.

69. In terms of improving the socio-economic conditions of IDPs, the Agency continued to allocate to IDPs monthly allowances and provide one-time monetary assistance. In cases of urgent need, temporary accommodation was facilitated by the Georgian authorities.

70. In order to support access to livelihood opportunities and address economic integration needs of IDPs and ecomigrants, the Agency provided financial support in the framework of the "IDP Vocational Education Support Programme". A number of entrepreneurs (IDPs and Ecomigrants) were selected for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME) grant support. Further awareness-raising activities were conducted to inform IDPs about livelihood programmes.

71. The delegation was informed of continuing activities that are planned to be implemented by the end of 2022, including the purchase of 1 500 individual houses for IDP families, the accommodation of some 1 200 IDP families in newly built buildings, the transfer of a further 1 000 state-owned properties to the private ownership of IDP families, and the transfer of 60 apartments to families of veterans in Tbilisi. A commitment was made by the Georgian Government in August 2022 to provide new residential areas, apartments and houses until 2025.

IV Activities of Council of Europe organs and institutions and their follow-up

IV.1 Operational activities

IV.1.i DG II/Youth

72. The Youth Action Week, organised in June 2022 in the framework of the youth campaign "Democracy Here, Democracy Now", brought together facilitators and youth leaders from all sides of the ABL. Participants discussed challenges faced by young people in conflict zones and the relation between conflict and democracy; they highlighted the importance of involving young people in peacebuilding processes expressed in the Call for Action that resulted from the week.

IV.1.ii Operational activities on confidence-building measures and their follow-up

73. All through the period under review, the co-ordination on Council of Europe confidence-building measures has been ensured with relevant actors. Close co-ordination with the Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality and the Liaison Mechanism have been maintained. Fully fledged activities will be carried out as soon as the situation permits to recover the previous regularity of people-to-people contacts, with an aim to maintain operational activities in areas where the pragmatic approach has enabled long-established dialogue and trust built between all actors concerned.

74. During the pandemic, the group of archive specialists from both sides of the ABL continued to work in an online format. The dialogue led to further exchange of information and documents and to discussion on the presentations of the new publications produced under the auspices of this project. These presentations will be carried out as soon as the situation permits, but in the meantime all actors involved in the project reiterated their willingness to continue working together.

75. The Secretariat continued to build on the results of past CBMs to maintain the level of trust and contacts between actors on both sides of the ABL. In particular, a CBMs mission was organised to Tbilisi from 13 to 15 September 2022 to carry out consultations with relevant national actors, international actors and Liaison Mechanism and civil society to develop initiatives in the current international context.

76. In addition to the follow-up to previous initiatives, efforts will focus on facilitating dialogue between psychologists specialised on war traumas and youth. Other proposals are currently under discussion with the Georgian Government and stakeholders on both sides of the ABL, notably on possible medical and cultural issues.