

[Home](#) > [International](#) > [Foreign affairs](#)

Speech

Russia's military invasion of Georgia: Joint statement to the OSCE

Ambassador Holland delivers a joint statement on behalf of the OSCE Group of Friends of Georgia to mark fifteen years since Russia's invasion of Georgia.

From: [Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office \(/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-development-office\)](#) and [Neil Holland \(/government/people/neil-holland\)](#)

Published 8 September 2023

Location: **Vienna**

Delivered on: **8 September 2023 (Transcript of the speech, exactly as it was delivered)**



I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. I will read a short version and the longer version will be distributed.

Mr. Chair, we reaffirm our full support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders.

Fifteen years since the Russian Federation's military invasion of Georgia, we remain deeply concerned over the continued occupation of Georgia's regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and underline the need for the peaceful resolution of the conflict based on full respect for international law and commitments, including the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act.

We condemn Russia's military aggression against Georgia in 2008 in blatant violation of international law and express our concern that Georgia has been a target of Russia's hybrid tactics as well as conventional warfare ever since regaining its independence. We express our deep concern over Russia's ongoing military presence as well as military exercises and violation of airspace in Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions. We also reiterate our condemnation of Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine.

We welcome Georgia's compliance with the EU-mediated 12 August 2008 ceasefire agreement. We call upon Russia to fulfil immediately its clear obligation under the ceasefire agreement to withdraw

its forces to pre-conflict positions. We call upon Russia to reverse its recognition of the so-called independence of Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions and to ensure safe and dignified return of all internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees to their homes in a manner consistent with applicable international law.

We note the January 2021 judgment of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) and its consequences, including its findings that Russia has exercised effective control over Georgia's regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia following the ceasefire agreement, including through its military presence. We recall the decision of the ECHR of 28 April 2023, which ordered the Russian Federation to pay up to 130 million euros in favour of conflict-affected Georgian citizens. We call on the Russian Federation to fully comply with these judgments.

We are particularly concerned over the ongoing installation of barbed wire fences and other artificial barriers along the administrative boundary lines (ABLs) and by the closure of so-called crossing points in the South Ossetia region of Georgia for the last four years. The partial and temporary re-opening of the so-called crossing points cannot be viewed as satisfactory. All so-called crossing points with Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions of Georgia must be reopened for all Georgian citizens residing on both sides of the ABLs.

We remain deeply concerned by ongoing arbitrary detentions around the ABLs involving vulnerable groups, and in some cases people with severe health problems. We call for the immediate and unconditional release of Irakli Bebuia, Kristine Takalandze, Asmat Tavadze, and all those under arbitrary detention.

We support the effective continuation of Geneva International Discussions, as the only format with the Russian Federation to address implementation of the EU-mediated ceasefire agreement, as well as the security, human rights, and humanitarian challenges

stemming from the unresolved Russia - Georgia conflict. We underline the necessity of progress on the core issues of the discussions, including on the non-use of force, establishing international security arrangements in Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions and ensuring the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of IDPs and refugees in accordance with international law.

We express our support for the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRM) in Ergneti and Gali and emphasise the important role they can have in preventing any escalation of the conflict and in helping to protect the safety and security of people on the ground. We express our great concern over the lengthy suspension of the Gali IPRM and urge its resumption without further delay or pre-conditions, in line with the ground rules.

We welcome the multi-stakeholder process for developing a comprehensive "State Strategy for de-occupation and peaceful conflict resolution" by the government of Georgia and the launch of the strategic review of the reconciliation and engagement policy. We support the Georgian government's 'A Step to a Better Future' peace initiative and its "A peace fund for a better future".

The Group of Friends of Georgia will continue to raise awareness of the conflict and of developments on the ground, hold Russia accountable for its obligations and commitments, and advocate for the conflict's peaceful resolution.

Published 8 September 2023

OGI

All content is available under the Open Government Licence v3.0, except where otherwise stated

© Crown copyright