



U.S. Mission to the
OSCE

On the Conflict in Georgia | Joint Statement of the Group of Friends of Georgia to the 2016 OSCE Ministerial Council

We reaffirm our full support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

We underline the need for a peaceful resolution over the conflict in Georgia, based on full respect of the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, and the fundamental norms and principles of international law.

We call upon the Russian Federation to fully implement the EU-mediated 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement, *inter alia* to withdraw its military forces from the occupied territories of Georgia.

We call upon the Russian Federation to reverse its recognition of Georgia's regions as independent states.

We support the Geneva International Discussions as an important format to address the consequences of the August 2008 war, and underline the need for progress on the core issues of the discussions, including the non-use of force, establishing international security arrangements in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia aimed at providing security and stability on the ground, and ensuring the safe and dignified return of IDPs and refugees.

We welcome the efficient work and contributions of the EU Monitoring Mission in preventing the escalation of tensions on the ground and call upon the Russian Federation to grant the EUMM access to the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. We welcome the resumption of the Gali Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) and meetings of the Ergneti IPRM, which contribute to security on the ground and respond to the needs of the conflict-affected population.

We express our deep concern over the continuous discrimination against ethnic Georgians residing in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. We condemn the gross violations of rights related to freedom of movement, residence, property, as well as right to education in one's native language and

underline that the placement of artificial obstacles, including barbed and razor wire fences along the occupation line, further aggravates the humanitarian situation on the ground.

We call upon the Russian Federation to enable access by international human rights monitoring mechanisms to the occupied territories of Georgia.

We encourage the OSCE's engagement in the process of finding a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Georgia and support of implementation of confidence-building measures with an aim to rebuilding trust and improving the living conditions of the conflict-affected communities.

We also encourage OSCE participating States to agree on reopening an OSCE cross-dimensional mission in Georgia, in particular for the benefit of the civilian population, including a monitoring capacity able to operate unhindered across the occupation line. The mission will considerably strengthen the OSCE's engagement in the Geneva International Discussions and Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms, as well as in implementation of CBMs. The Friends look forward to working with OSCE and Georgian authorities to develop supportive humanitarian, educational, medical, and other outreach opportunities to increase contacts.

As delivered at the closing session of the 2016 OSCE Ministerial Council, Hamburg, Germany

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