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Agenda item 35

**Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their
implications for international peace, security
and development****Security Council
Seventieth year****Identical letters dated 11 December 2015 from the Permanent
Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the
Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council**

I have the honour to transmit herewith the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, dated 10 December 2015, regarding the thirty-fourth round of the Geneva international discussions (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex issued as a document of the seventieth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 35, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Kaha **Imnadze**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex to the identical letters dated 11 December 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia regarding the thirty-fourth round of the Geneva international discussions

Tbilisi, 10 December 2015

The thirty-fourth round of the Geneva international discussions was held on 9 December 2015. The participants in the discussions took part, in their individual capacity, in the two working groups, the first focusing on security and stability in the Russian-occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions of Georgia, and the other on issues related to the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees to the places of their origin. The discussions were co-chaired by representatives of the European Union, the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and attended by participants from Georgia, the Russian Federation and the United States of America. The Head of the Provisional Administration of the former South Ossetian Autonomous District and the Chairman of the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, as well as representatives of the Russian occupation regimes in Sokhumi and Tskhinvali, took part in the discussions.

The talks were conducted in a business-like atmosphere, in accordance with the agenda. After the six-hour-long session, while reviewing the fourth agenda item — the return of internally displaced persons and refugees — within the second working group, the representatives of the Sokhumi and Tskhinvali occupation regimes, and later the participants from Russia, walked out of the talks. As a result, in accordance with established practice, the co-chairs had to stop the discussions.

The participants from Georgia discussed all important agenda items within both working groups.

Within the first working group, the participants from Georgia reviewed the security situation in the occupied regions. In particular, emphasis was placed on the results of the implementation of the so-called “treaties” signed by Russia with its occupation regimes in Sokhumi and Tskhinvali, as well as on the concerns over the militarization of the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions of Georgia, the increasing numbers of illegal military drills and the violations by the Russian Federation of the airspace controlled by the central Government of Georgia. The Georgian delegation focused on the statement by the so-called “Abkhazian Defense Minister” that the united group of military forces might be involved in the military operations outside the region of Abkhazia, which once again illustrates the necessity to ensure the non-use of force and international security arrangements in the occupied territories.

During the discussions on the non-use of force, some participants attempted to politicize the issue, which was in fact aimed at denying the responsibility of Russia as the occupying power in exercising effective control in the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions of Georgia. The Georgian delegation once again called on the Russian Federation to undertake a legally binding non-use-of-force commitment in response to Georgia’s reiterated unilateral pledge on the non-use of force.

The Georgian delegation emphasized the self-isolation policy of the Sokhumi and Tskhinvali occupation regimes, which set up special permits for the local population to

move across the administrative boundary line. Special attention was paid to the continued installation of fences and other artificial obstacles, as well as to the cases of illegal detentions for crossing the so-called “border” and kidnappings of Georgian citizens. In particular, the participants condemned the fact that residents were abducted from the yard of the church in the village of Adzvi on 23 November, St. George’s Day, by Russian occupation troops.

The Georgian delegation emphasized that the artificial delay of the resumption of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism in Gali jeopardizes stability on the ground. They called on other participants to engage constructively in the negotiations and to renounce the practice of walk-outs.

Within the second working group, the freedom of movement, the right to receive education in one’s native language, the need to ensure respect for human rights inside the occupied territories and the return of internally displaced persons and refugees were discussed. It should be stressed that in the first half of the day, the Russian representative attempted to artificially politicize the humanitarian group by neglecting the established practice of negotiations within the format. However, the constructive approach of the Georgian delegates and co-moderators made it possible to normalize the situation.

The Georgian participants thoroughly discussed the restrictions on education in the native language in the occupied territories, in particular the Gali district, and demanded assurances of the possibility of receiving education in the Georgian language. During the discussion of the issue, the Georgian participants and the representatives of international organizations underscored the need for international monitoring on the ground in order to properly assess how the right to receive education in the mother tongue is protected. A discussion was held on the restrictions of free movement on the local population and the violation of property rights, and in this context it was noted that discrimination on ethnic grounds is totally unacceptable.

The issue concerning the return of internally displaced persons and refugees was discussed, but unfortunately the participants and co-moderators were not allowed to complete the discussion in a constructive manner. Representatives of the international organizations and the United States, together with the Georgian delegation, stressed the importance of making substantial progress in ensuring respect for the human rights of internally displaced persons and refugees.

The Georgian participants repeatedly reaffirmed their readiness to continue their constructive participation in the discussions and to undertake effective measures with a view to conducting concrete humanitarian projects aimed at addressing the pressing needs of the local population in the Russian-occupied territories of Georgia.

The Georgian delegation expressed its gratitude to Angelo Gnaedinger, co-chair from OSCE, and to Magdalena Grono of the European Union, co-moderator of the second working group, for their efforts in achieving progress at the Geneva international discussions.

The information session related to documentation on the conflict-affected areas was held on 8 December.

The thirty-fifth round of the Geneva international discussions will be held on 22 and 23 March 2016.