



United States Mission to the OSCE

10 Years of Russian Occupation of the Sovereign Georgian Regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia

As delivered by Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Gregory Macris
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
August 30, 2018

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The United States associates itself with today's statement by the Group of Friends of Georgia recalling 10 years of Russian occupation of the sovereign Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Important principles underpin our international order: sovereignty, territorial integrity, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and respect for non-intervention in internal affairs. Regrettably, the Russian Federation continues to violate its international obligations and contravene its OSCE commitments in Georgia, as it does in Ukraine, and elsewhere. The United States joins forces with many of Georgia's friends at the OSCE to hold Russia accountable for its violation of international law, and to expose Russia's attempts to distort the truth and rewrite history. The United States urges Russia to withdraw its forces to pre-war positions per the 2008 ceasefire agreement and reverse its recognition of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states.

The United States supports the Geneva International Discussions (GID) as an important format to address the security, human rights, and humanitarian challenges stemming from the unresolved conflict. Ten years after the establishment of the GID, we regret the lack of progress on the core issues of the discussions, including the non-use of force, establishing international security arrangements in Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions aimed at providing security and stability on the ground, and ensuring the voluntary, safe, and dignified return of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees.

The United States underscores the importance of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms in Gali and Ergneti, and encourages the participants to find proper solutions for the safety and humanitarian needs of the conflict-affected populations.

The United States calls for greater access to the occupied territories for diplomatic officials and human rights organizations. The OSCE should also have access to these territories. An OSCE field presence in the country would facilitate this access. In this manner, as well as through its independent institutions and structures, the OSCE could contribute to Georgia's peacebuilding efforts.

The United States remains deeply concerned about the killings of Georgian citizens Archil Tatumashvili and Giga Otkhozoria. The United States again calls for full and transparent

investigations. These tragic deaths underscore the immediate need for international mechanisms to improve security and stability on the ground.

The United States fully supports Georgia's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.