

# Frozen conflicts

in the post-Soviet space

October 30, 2015

# We discussed already

October 2, 2015

Current status of the frozen conflicts in the South Caucasus, different intensity and different methods and tools of mediation

- The conflict Georgia - South Ossetia
- The conflict Georgia – Abkhazia
- The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

## We discussed already

October 16, 2015

Involvement of main stakeholders (EU / USA, Russia), different approaches and interests

- Mediating role of the EU and USA, forms of cooperation
- Types of the EU involvement
- Role of Russia, specifics of Russian approach
- Forms of involvement of the UN and OSCE

# Conflicts in Georgia

**Main tools used by the EU and International community for solving the conflicts in Georgia**

## Mediation tools in Georgia Conflicts

- EUSR for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia
- Geneva International discussions, participants, preparation of individual rounds
- The civilian monitoring mission (EUMM) in Georgia, genesis and its basic objectives, the concrete experience
- Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) examples of response to concrete security and humanitarian situation at place, stabilizing impact on the situation

# Conflicts in Georgia

The EU Special Representative for the South  
Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia

# EU Special Representative

The European Union currently has nine Special Representatives in different countries and regions of the world.

The EUSRs promote the EU's policies and interests in troubled regions and countries.

# EU Special Representative

They play an important role in the development of a stronger and more effective EU Foreign and Security Policy and in the Union's efforts to become a more effective actor on the world stage.

They provide the EU with an active political presence in key countries and regions, acting as a “voice” and “face” for the EU and its policies.



# EU Special Representative

The EUSR for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia was mandated to support the following policy objectives:

- to contribute to a peaceful settlement of conflicts in the region (by promoting the return of refugees and internally displaced persons and through other appropriate means)
- to support the implementation of such a settlement in accordance with the principles of international law

## EU Special Representative

- to engage constructively with main interested actors concerning the region
- to encourage and to support further cooperation between Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, and, as appropriate, their neighbouring countries;
- to enhance the Union's effectiveness and visibility in the region.

# EU Special Representative

- help to prepare the international talks held under point 6 of the settlement plan of 12 August 2008 - “Geneva International Discussions” (including on arrangements for security and stability in the region, the issue of refugees and internally displaced persons, on the basis of internationally recognized principles)
- any other subject, by mutual agreement between the parties.



# The Geneva International discussions

## Geneva International Discussions

The Geneva International Discussions address the consequences of the 2008 conflict in Georgia.

They are chaired by the EU, the OSCE and the UN.

Representatives from Tbilisi, Tskhinvali and Sukhumi, as well as Moscow and Washington take part in the discussions.

## Geneva International Discussions

The co-chairs of GID:

- The EUSR for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia Ambassador Herbert Salber
- Representative of the UN Secretary General for Georgia Ambassador Antti Turunen
- The Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for the South Caucasus Ambassador Angelo Gnaedinger

## Geneva International Discussions

After the cessation of the UN and OSCE missions in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, respectively, following the August 2008 Russo–Georgian war the Geneva process is the only platform bringing together all stakeholders to discuss security-related issues and to work on the humanitarian needs of the conflict-affected population.

There have been 33 rounds of talks in Geneva since October 15, 2008.



# Geneva International Discussions

Two Working Groups:

Working Group I on security issues

Working Group II on humanitarian issues

+

Information sessions



# Geneva International Discussions

## Preparation of the GD round

- Field trips
- Coordination with the US, UN and OSCE
- The main topics
- Information sessions



Field trip ahead of the 32<sup>nd</sup> round of the  
Geneva Discussions

## Field trip

In the week of 8 June, the EUSR for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia, undertook together with the UN and OSCE Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions (GID) a visit to Georgia, including to Sukhumi and Tskhinvali.

The visit was followed by Co-Chairs' consultations in Moscow, held on 16 June. The purpose of the visits was to prepare for the 32nd, GID round, scheduled for 30 June and 1 July 2015.

## Field trip

In all places, the Co-Chairs assessed with interlocutors the possibilities for maintaining the GID process on track in the context of a series of complicating developments, including

- (i) the signing of the Russian-South Ossetian "Treaty on Alliance and Integration" coinciding with the previous GID round,
- (ii) the continued refusal of the Abkhaz and South Ossetian participants to discuss IDPs and refugee related issues as long as Georgia continues to bring the issue to the UNGA where the former cannot participate .

## Field trip

Protests being particularly disruptive at June GID rounds, when the UNGA resolutions are regularly adopted (at the June 2014 GID round, the Abkhaz and South Ossetian participants walked out shortly after the opening remarks and the session had to be closed); this year the UNGA resolution was passed on 3 June.

## Field trip

A response to the UNGA resolution by the Abkhaz and South Ossetian participants was therefore expected in the upcoming discussions, but its nature and intensity was yet to be seen.

While Abkhaz Foreign Minister Chirikba told the Co-Chairs that they had not yet decided whether they would participate or not in the next GID round and would take their decision upon consultations with the South Ossetian and Russian participants.

## Field trip

The South Ossetian participants expressed commitment to the GID, including to the next round; and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Karasin stated clearly that the GID are necessary to ensure stability and security on the ground and they would therefore participate without question.



## Field trip

Following the disruption of the 31st GID round, there was a clear understanding on the part of the Co-chairs as well as all participants that the possibilities of overcoming differences with last minute choreographic deals had reached its limits.

The Co-Chairs stressed the need to put an end to systematic disputes over the agenda and modalities of the GID rounds, which are largely motivated by considerations over the status issue, and which prevent from holding substantial discussions.



## Field trip

They explained about their proposal to adopt a more generic agenda for both Working Groups, which would allow all participants to bring topics of interest and relevance to the table, but that no vetos on topics introduced by other participants would be accepted.

Furthermore, co-chairs introduced the idea of basic ground rules giving them more authority in the conduct of the debates and committing the participants to abstain from imposing time limitations or participants' walking out. The Co-Chairs suggested that the proposal could be discussed during bilateral consultations at the next GID round and would be implemented not before the 33rd GID round in October 2015.

## Field trip

Georgian Deputy Foreign Minister Dondua, who was the first to receive the proposal, showed scepticism about the proposal, asking for additional time for internal Georgian considerations on how to make the GID more results oriented.

In Sukhumi, df Foreign Minister Chirikba welcomed the principle of introducing changes in the agenda and overall modalities of the GID and agreed to contribute to the exercise. At the same time, and upon his understanding that any change to the current arrangements would require a consensus among all participants, he expressed doubt that the formula of an open agenda could work.

## Field trip

In Tskhinvali, Mr Djoev advocated in favour of the existing agenda, which, in his view, makes it explicit that the non-use of force issue is the priority topic. Russian DFM Karasin supported the idea of a generic agenda, while cautioning that some participants might consider curtailing their right to walk out as limiting their right to "freedom of expression".

## Field trip

Overall, all counterparts stated that the situation on the ground was stable and calm. While concerns were raised about military exercises on respective sides, no incidents were reported that could have threatened the stability.

Co-chairs took the opportunity of the concerns voiced about military exercises to remind participants about the information session held during the last round of GID on the subject of threat perceptions. It was suggested that a more in depth discussion on threats perceived by participants could be held in WG 1 on security issues during the upcoming round or thereafter. Furthermore, participants agreed to continue the process of drafting a joint statement of participants on non-use of force during the next round.

## Field trip

The EU and OSCE co-moderators of WG 2 on humanitarian issues used the visit to Abkhazia for holding consultations in the Gali District with a special focus on health issues, including medical evacuations, and on the issue of language of instruction in schools. All interlocutors, including df FM Chirikba, agreed that medical evacuations are important and generally work, but that their modalities could be improved.



## Field trip

A case of a young boy's untimely death in Gali in May due to a complicated health condition illustrated the vulnerability of conflict-affected populations whose access to health care is not always optimal, and whose socio-economic and political calculations often compound each other. The meetings indicated to the co-moderators that the fatality was not caused by freedom of movement restrictions, even though the boy did not have relevant crossing documents.

## Field trip

Contradictory information was provided regarding the Abkhaz policy vis-a-vis the Georgian speaking schools in the lower part of the Gali District (under de facto legislation Georgian as language of instruction is not allowed, but in practice Georgian has traditionally been used in these schools).

At a local level, all interlocutors including the local de facto administration informed about a recent decision to impose Russian as the language of instruction in these schools, which could potentially lead to a significant part of the population leaving the region.

## Field trip

However, df FM Chirikba denied that this been decided. He stated that a debate was currently ongoing in Sukhumi regarding the possibility to have more courses in the Russian language and the need to find alternatives to text books from the Georgian side, whereas the Georgian language would continue to be tolerated.



## Field trip

All interlocutors confirmed that the announced plan to grant the population in the Gali District the status of "Foreigners" and to issue resident permits is stagnating.

As a result, more and more inhabitants in the Gali District do not hold any documents, which creates additional difficulties for their possibilities to cross the administrative boundary line (ABL).

## Field trip

In Sukhumi, df FM Chirikba reiterated his protest against the involvement of the Tbilisi-based Abkhaz government-in-exile in the Geneva Discussions, and its interference in administrative matters in the Gali District and warned that he would challenge the participation in the GID of representatives from this structure.

## Field trip

In Tskhinvali, the Co-Chairs held a meeting with df President Tibilov, who explained that the overall policy of South Ossetia was based upon the obligation to provide the population with security, which, he insisted, is a fundamental right.

He stressed that Tskhinvali was willing to develop good relations with the Georgian side, as a neighbouring country and upon security guarantees.

## Field trip

He explained that developing such relations would require achieving progress on commitments to the non-use of force and an agreement on the delineation of the (administrative boundary) line.

Only then could flexibility be introduced in the crossing regime.

## Field trip

In addition, he called for progress on the search of the fate of the missing persons and for a release of detainees on an all-for-all basis and insisted that no progress should be expected on any other issues as long as these demands are not met.

## Field trip

From Tskhinvali, the Co-Chairs travelled to Akhagori through the recently built direct road (which evidently required significant RF investment).

They held meetings with the local df administration and visited a newly refurbished hospital, which was not operational due to an obvious lack of specialised medical staff.



32<sup>nd</sup> round of the Geneva Discussions  
(July 2015)

# 32nd round of the Geneva Discussions

The 32<sup>nd</sup> round of the Geneva International Discussions (GID) was held on 1 July 2015 against the backdrop of the recently adopted UN General Assembly resolution on IDPs introduced by Georgia on an annual basis.

The June GID rounds have traditionally been turbulent due to protests over the resolution by Russian, Abkhaz and Ossetian participants: the GID round just a year ago was disrupted already after 40 minutes.



# 32nd round of the Geneva Discussions

Expectations for the current round of discussions were therefore relatively low. In a surprising turn of events, the 32<sup>nd</sup> round of GID did not only go undisrupted, but in fact saw a more lively and engaged exchange than in recent months.

## 32nd round of the Geneva Discussions

This can be attributed to a sense of crisis around the process following an explosive disruption in March and a subsequent strong push by the Co-chairs to revise the working methods by introducing a more generic agenda;

the clear aim of the Russian Federation to ensure a stable process in a turbulent neighbourhood;

as well as the gradually increasing intent of the Georgian participants to bring a more positive agenda to the discussions.

## 32nd round of the Geneva Discussions

Discussions focused on perceived threats due to e.g. the establishment of a NATO training centre in Georgia as well as increased Russian Federation military exercises;

the perceived isolation of Abkhaz due to many EU member states reservations to issue visas to Abkhaz holders of Russian Federation passports;

recently published reports on the human rights situation in the breakaway regions; education and health care related issues in Abkhazia as well as environmental issues.

## 32nd round of the Geneva Discussions

The disrupted 31<sup>st</sup> round of GID in March had reinforced a sense of crisis in the process which has been prevalent since summer 2014 and resulted in proposals of the co-chairs to review some of the working methods of the GID, in particular by moving towards a more generic agenda for the discussions; the latter was perceived by participants with unease, potentially resulting in an effort to show that the current arrangements suffice and do not need revision.

## 32nd round of the Geneva Discussions

Furthermore, the Russian Federation Deputy Foreign Minister Karasin clearly indicated his wish to ensure a smooth functioning of the GID and will have communicated this to Abkhaz and South Ossetian participants.

Finally, Tbilisi is currently reviewing its approach to breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia; a leading figure in this process is David Dondua, the Georgian Deputy Foreign Minister and chief negotiator in the GID.

## 32nd round of the Geneva Discussions

The Abkhaz and South Ossetian participants continued to refuse to engage in a discussion on returns in the GID as long as Georgia insists on bringing the resolution on IDPs to the UN. They left their seats vacant in Working Group II during this agenda item. However, a Russian participant remained in the room and thereby allowed the proceedings to continue.



## 32nd round of the Geneva Discussions

Heated exchanges on a number of other issues gave the co-chairs the opportunity to underline to all participants that it was more productive to engage in a discussion, make one's position understood and listen to counterparts than to boycott the exchange.

While it is uncertain whether this message will impact on the behaviour of the participants in the longer-run, this round of GID saw a more substance oriented exchange than previous rounds.



## 32nd round of the Geneva Discussions

In Working Group I, the security situation on the ground was assessed by all participants as overall relatively calm and stable with no serious incidents having occurred that could have a destabilizing impact on the situation.

The work of EUMM and the IPRM in Ergneti and the hotline were praised as important for ensuring stability and avoiding escalation of small scale incidents.

All participants flagged the importance of resuming the IPRM in Gali and talks to this end continued between the Georgian and Abkhaz participants supported by the co-chairs.

## 32nd round of the Geneva Discussions

In follow-up to an information session focused on threat perceptions during the 31<sup>st</sup> round of GID, co-chairs called on participants to review their own perceptions of threats and bring these into the discussions.

Participants started engaging in this discourse and while initial responses were predictable – ranging from the establishment of a NATO training centre in Georgia on the one side to increased Russian Federation military exercises on the other – this exchange has the potential to over time address some of the more substantial underlying perceptions of the conflict.

## 32nd round of the Geneva Discussions

Regarding the joint statement of participants on non-use of force, a further drafting session was held.

While all participants continue to highlight non-use of force as one of their priorities in the context of the GID, there continues to be little progress in moving forward on this issue due to the conflicting narratives about the nature of the conflict as such.

## 32nd round of the Geneva Discussions

Several issues were raised by participants in both Working Groups.

The Abkhaz participants made a strong point by calling upon the EU to support opportunities for travels of residents from the entities to the EU, independently from its non-recognition policy and irrespective of the place where travel documents were issued.

## 32nd round of the Geneva Discussions

They shared their perception that the Abkhaz are subject to "collective punishment" at Tbilisi's behest, and stressed that isolation was counterproductive.

Abkhaz participants went as far as considering counter measures against EU officials traveling to Abkhazia for a period of time.

The Georgian participants expressed readiness to look at pragmatic formulas for facilitating travel with apolitical purpose.



## 32nd round of the Geneva Discussions

The Russian, Abkhaz and South Ossetian participants strongly criticized the recent initiative by Georgia to issue and distribute within the OSCE quarterly reports on the "Human Rights Situation in the Occupied Regions of Georgia" and warned that such a step would have a negative impact on the work of the GID.

Similarly a recent report published by the United States State Department on the Human Rights situation in Georgia was strongly criticized as biased and uninformed by above participants.

## 32nd round of the Geneva Discussions

The debates in Working Group II were held in an overall relatively constructive atmosphere and revealed a willingness to achieve progress on a number of issues. A reason for the substantial discussions was also that the co-moderators, who had recently held more in depth consultations in the Gali and Akhhalgori districts, could report on their findings.



## 32nd round of the Geneva Discussions

Instead of embarking on mutual accusations over their respective divergent assessments of the developments, the participants commented on the co-moderators' reports on various aspects of the humanitarian agenda, and their recommendations.

## 32nd round of the Geneva Discussions

This step towards increasing monitoring of the humanitarian situation on the ground was highly appreciated and provided a good basis for addressing concerns with regard to health (including medical evacuation), education (including language of instruction, curricula and access to schools), residence and crossing permits and regimes (including existing gaps), and water-related issues (including irrigation water through the large Tiriphoni channel).

## 32nd round of the Geneva Discussions

Georgian and Abkhaz participants continued to hold consultations on ongoing concrete undertakings in the field of cultural heritage, including bilaterally at experts level in the margins the meeting of Working Group II;

during this meeting Georgian participants provided further archive materials to the Abkhaz. The South Ossetian participants shared their views that steps should be taken (initially by Russian experts), to protect and further explore the Kudaro Paleolithic site complex (located in the Kvaisa District).

## 32nd round of the Geneva Discussions

In addition, the participants expressed interest in jointly revisiting environmental and environmental heritage issues.

The Abkhaz participants asked for expertise and support in their quest to eradicate the box tree moth (Cydalima), an aggressive pest that risks destroying hundred year old buxus forests native to Abkhazia; the Georgian participants called for measures aimed at restricting the extraction for construction purposes of sand and gravel from the Black Sea coast.

# 32nd round of the Geneva Discussions

The co-moderators are discussing with participants the details of possible interventions to address these issues, and find ways of cooperating across the conflict divides.

## 32nd round of the Geneva Discussions

As expected, the South Ossetian and Abkhaz participants walked out from the Working Group II under the agenda item "Returns".

However, the presence of a Russian participant made it possible to avoid a disruption of the meeting, and a short exchange on IDP related issues followed during which the UNHCR detailed some findings of their survey on the intentions of the displaced populations.



# Field trip ahead of the 33<sup>nd</sup> round of the Geneva Discussions



## Field trip

In the week of 7 September 2015, the EUSR for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia, undertook, together with the UN and OSCE Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions (GID), a round of consultations in Tbilisi, Tskhinvali and Sukhumi, in preparation for the 33<sup>rd</sup> round of the GID, scheduled for 6-7 October 2015.

## Field trip

In Tbilisi, the Co-Chairs also met with the new Foreign Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili. The Minister highlighted the continued importance of the GID for Georgia and confirmed that Deputy Foreign Minister Dondua will remain the chief-negotiator on the Georgian side. The visit to Georgia was followed by consultations with Deputy Foreign Minister Karasin, held in Moscow on 15 September 2015.

# Field trip

Consultations with all interlocutors made clear that there is a fair chance for more constructive discussions within the framework of GID.

Difficult and politicized issues like disputes over the agenda were not any more as virulent as they had been before.

Consultations were clearly dominated by substance, not tactical considerations.

## Field trip

In Tbilisi, DFM Dondua explained ongoing efforts within the government of Georgia to consolidate a new approach to conflict resolution.

He mentioned that a number of proposals, designed to stimulate direct dialogue with the entities, were under consideration.

## Field trip

He stressed the need to secure stable GID rounds and to promote more opportunities for informal bilateral discussions in their margins. He expressed the view that Sukhumi was interested in such a bilateral dialogue, but that steps would be needed in order to stimulate Tskhinvali's engagement.

## Field trip

In this respect, he informed about ongoing consultations with the Interior Minister on a possible release of Georgian, South Ossetian and Abkhaz detainees on an all-for-all basis and on a renewed and promising investigation into the fate of the three missing Ossetian youths that had vanished in the aftermath of the 2008 conflict and have since been a continued issue of discussion in both the IPRM and the GID.

## Field trip

DFM Dondua expressed the view that the best way to secure a stable GID round at this stage would be to continue with the current agenda and to discourage disturbances by the Abkhaz and South Ossetian participants under IDPs and refugees issues, which had been the reason for several disruptions of recent GID rounds.



## Field trip

The security situation was overall assessed as relatively calm and stable with the exception of the tension in July and early August around the erection of additional "border signs" on the South Ossetian administrative boundary line.

## Field trip

All interlocutors praised the work of the IPRM which had been convened for an extraordinary meeting. DFM Dondua as well as the leading South Ossetian participant in the GID, Mr Djoev, expressed appreciation for the Co-Chairs' active involvement in passing messages between Tbilisi and Tskhinvali and for the way the EUMM had handled the tension.

## Field trip

In follow-up to discussions during the previous two rounds of GID the Co-Chairs handed over a food-for-thought paper with the aim of launching a broader discussion on threat perceptions in order to gradually move to a more substantial discussion on the factors undermining long-term stability and improving transparency on real or perceived threats.

## Field trip

On the issue of non-use of force it was agreed to foresee a further drafting session on the draft statement of participants, while it is increasingly becoming apparent that a more political discussion on the matter is required if remaining differences on the topic should be overcome.

## Field trip

The leading South Ossetian participant in the GID, Mr Djoev, offered the Co-Chairs a short field trip to Java, located on the Trans-Caucasian Highway, in between Tskhinvali and the Roki tunnel. The visit gave the Co-Chairs an opportunity to see new settlements, small blocks of flats and groups of cottages in places where there had been before Georgian villages.

## Field trip

The EU co-moderator of Working Group 2, together with an OSCE colleague, used the opportunity of the Co-Chairs' visit to Sukhumi to undertake a visit to different schools in Abkhazia attended by ethnic Georgian, Abkhaz, Russian and Armenian children.

In preparation for the next GID round, the co-moderators discussed with the pedagogic staff ongoing challenges of instruction in a multi-lingual environment.

## Field trip

Interlocutors in Tbilisi had raised strong concerns that the ongoing introduction of the Russian language in eleven formerly Georgian-language schools located in the lower part of the Gali District was being implemented in an excessively radical way, without proper resources and leaving only a few hours of the Georgian language being taught as a subject (not language of instruction).



## Field trip

Interlocutors in Tbilisi had expressed their fear that this could lead to some Georgian families deciding to re-settle on Tbilisi-administered territory.

Interlocutors in Gali suggested this causes great problems to teachers and children, none of whom have a sufficient command of Russian.

## Field trip

While reiterating that the introduction of the Russian language was aimed at promoting the necessary social integration of the ethnic Georgian population, *df* Foreign Minister Chirikba promised to the Co-Chairs to discuss possible shortcomings in the implementation of this policy with the decision-makers concerned.

## Field trip

*Df* FM Chirikba also agreed to brief the participants at the next GID round on the plans to distribute new Abkhaz passports and residents permits, for which Sukhumi has just received from Moscow forms. In Tskhinvali, Mr. Djoev confirmed that a draft law on the status of foreign residents was under preparation.

## Field trip

These are important developments as they promise to provide clarity to ethnic Georgian residents living in Abkhazia and South Ossetia on their status in these entities, and their rights; the lack of such clarity has caused much insecurity among these populations over the past months.

# Field trip

In all places, the Co-Chairs handed over four draft discussion papers laying down basic principles for discussions in the Working Group 2 on

- (i) missing persons,
- (ii) the promotion of crossings,
- (iii) the facilitation of mobility and human contacts, including beyond the region, and
- (iv) IDPs and refugees.

## Field trip

The Co-Chairs suggested that comments on these papers on sensitive issues could be discussed first in a bilateral format and later collectively with all participants during the next GID round.

In Moscow, DFM Karasin showed readiness to engage in these discussions, provided that they do not diminish space for talks on more hard security issues like the non-use of force.

## Field trip

At the last GID round the Abkhaz participants had asked for urgent assistance on an ecological issue: the quick expansion of the box tree moth (*Cydalimas*) had infested and seriously damaged unique forests of box trees in Abkhazia.

The EUSR-team had provided over the summer assistance by a Swiss-based Belgian scientist.



## Field trip

The expert accompanied the Co-Chairs on their travel to Sukhumi and carried out assessments of the infestation on the ground.

Next expert-consultations might take place in the margins of the next GID round.

## Field trip

All interlocutors reiterated their interest in pursuing discussions on cultural heritage. In this respect, they welcomed the Co-Chairs' intention to invite a UNESCO expert for an information session at the next GID round. In continuation of the bilateral Georgian-Abkhaz consultations on archives in the margins of the Working Group 2, participants also welcomed the offer to invite an expert on archives.

## Field trip

In Sukhumi, *df* FM Chirikba handed over to the Co-Chairs comments on the *Second Quarterly Report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on the Human Rights Situation in the Occupied Regions of Georgia*.

He stressed his intention to respond at the next GID round to what he characterized as groundless accusations.



# 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions (July 2015)

# 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

The 33rd round of Geneva International Discussions (GID) was held on 7 October 2015.

Discussions took place in a constructive and substantive atmosphere with frank and open exchanges that proceeded despite persistent divergent views.

## 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

Participants discussed security-related issues and assessed the overall situation on the ground as relatively calm and stable. They recalled, however, the tensions in July/August over the erection of demarcation signs along the South Ossetian administrative boundary line (ABL):

Participants thanked the Co-Chairs for their effective mediation and EUMM for objective reporting on the issue.

# 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

An exchange on the joint statement on non-use of force took place with limited progress due to continuing different narratives on the conflict.

A broader discussion on threat perceptions allowed for an open exchange of perceptions and - at least partially - responses from other participants with the aim of dispelling concerns.



## 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

Freedom of movement, both across the ABL as well as externally was discussed in a controversial manner and largely from a confrontational status-related perspective; attempts to bring in pragmatic approaches in the interest of the affected population were only marginally accepted.

# 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

The participants welcomed the continued good cooperation in the meetings of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) in Ergneti and urged for the resumption of the Gali IPRM.

Regarding humanitarian issues, participants reviewed a number of key topics relating to the humanitarian situation on the ground.

# 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

Among others, they substantively discussed issues relating to multilingual education and languages of instruction in Gali schools, freedom of movement and mobility, missing persons, environmental and cultural heritage.

# 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

The issue of IDPs and refugees was also raised. In this regard, the Co-Chairs reiterated their appeal to participants to engage constructively on all agenda items in the future.

## 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

While the round could be completed without disruption, Abkhaz and South Ossetian participants left the room during the agenda item on returns, refusing to take part in the discussion in the context of the GID as long as Georgia continues to table the resolution on IDPs in the UN GA where they have no possibility of making their voice heard.

# 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

An information session was held for participants on the issue of protection of cultural heritage with a presentation by an expert from UNESCO on the subject.

# 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

Substantive discussions proceeded in a constructive atmosphere with frank and open exchanges taking place despite divergent views that persist.

It was positive to note that there was a more intense exchange across the table, and in particular the Georgian participants led by DFM Dondua, aimed at coming up with concrete responses to issues raised by other participants.



## 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

The security situation was assessed as overall relatively calm and stable, although recent months have seen an increase in incidents along the ABL as well as an increasing number of Russian-led military exercises in the broader region.

The importance of restraint and avoiding low level incidents to spiral out of control was underlined.

## 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

The events around the appearance of additional demarcation signs along the South Ossetian ABL in July/August were extensively discussed and perceived as provocation by the Georgian side, while the South Ossetian and Russian participants considered the counter-demonstrations on the Georgian side of the ABL as provocation and risk to the security along the ABL.

## 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

While the new signs still are on the South Ossetian side of the ABL and the ABL itself therefore was not moved, approximately 55 hectare of agricultural land that was cultivated by Georgian farmers up to the summer was now out of reach to them.

## 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

Co-chairs praised the responsible behaviour of security actors in calming down the situation and avoiding an escalation.

In this context, the Incident Prevention and Response mechanism (IPRM) and the hotline were highlighted as instrumental in ensuring stability.

Similarly, the continued disruption of the IPRM in the Abkhaz theatre was seen as a critical shortcoming and co-chairs called on participants to find a compromise to resume the IPRM's work.

## 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

A discussion commenced on threat perceptions, a notion that had been introduced by co-chairs to reinvigorate the debate on security and possible mechanisms to improve security and stability on the ground.

The aim of this approach is to move towards more transparency and information sharing on the perceived threats.

Several participants actively engaged in this debate, highlighting perceived threats, e.g. military exercises on the other side, the NATO training centre established in Georgia.

## 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

Inter alia, a public health laboratory in Tbilisi was highlighted as a threat by South Ossetian participants and the Georgian side used the opportunity to explain the work of the laboratory and invite the South Ossetian participants to visit and get a personal understanding.

# 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

A further drafting session on a joint statement of participants on non-use of force was held with participants.

While limited progress was made, the positions continue to be far apart due to the different narratives on the conflict:



## 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

The Georgian side sees the conflict as a Russian-Georgian conflict and aims for a non-use of force declaration from the Russian Federation; while the Russian side sees the conflict as between Georgia and Abkhazia/South Ossetia and calls on Georgia to commit not to use force against Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

## 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

The Georgian participants announced the willingness to engage in a discussion on the simultaneous release of detainees by the Georgian, Abkhaz and South Ossetian participants with the intention of taking this up in a side-meeting on the margins.

## 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

The status of the Georgian population in Gali and Akhalgori districts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia respectively continued to be discussed with uncertainties regarding their status, their freedom of movement across the ABL as well as other rights raised by participants in a confrontational, status-focused approach;

## 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

South Ossetian and Abkhaz participants especially highlighted their perception of the ABL as a state border. Calls from the co-chairs to look for pragmatic solutions, leaving status issues aside in the interest of improving the conditions of the affected population went largely unheard.

## 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

The co-moderators visited schools in Abkhazia in September to explore language education issues in schools frequented by Georgian, Abkhaz, Armenian and Russian children there.

The round saw a heated debate on issues of multilingualism and cultural and identity maintenance, as well as approaches to language of instruction complexities.

# 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

The co-moderators appealed to de facto Abkhaz authorities to uphold relevant international standards and stressed that it was important to ensure education had to be provided in a way that is effective and accessible.

## 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

A set of operational conclusions was agreed on in Working Group on humanitarian issues to organize an information session on the subject of multilingualism and multilingual education, ideally with the involvement of international expertise; to explore possibilities for a Georgian-Abkhaz exchange on the issue in a smaller more operational format of a working group between the rounds; and work on supporting local methodological and teaching capacities, including by a UNICEF/EU-funded project.



# 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

An in-depth discussion also took place about humanitarian aspects of crossings. Co-moderators welcomed the positive dynamic that has been in place regarding medical evacuations.

They stressed the need to ensure evacuations also in cases of genuine emergencies where patients do not hold relevant documentation.

## 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

They also stressed that it was important to ensure access to land in areas where signs and obstacles to movement have been raised (especially in South Ossetian context). There was a debate about school children crossings – and the need to facilitate their movement so as to ensure access to education of choice (especially in the Abkhaz context).

## 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

A highlight of the round was also a meeting that took place in its margins between Georgian and Abkhaz participants on archive issues, facilitated by the co-moderators. This was a fourth in a series of such meetings and this time, participants further deepened practical cooperation. Georgian colleagues brought over copies of a number of significant archive materials and copies of rare books that the Abkhaz had requested during the past round. They agreed to plan a broader meeting in the margins of the December round with the involvement of local experts from both sides.

## 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

Furthermore, the follow up to a request made by the Abkhaz participants during the 32nd round of GID regarding the box tree moth, a pest that has infested Eastern Black Sea coastal forests, were discussed. In order to address the issue on the ground an EU-funded European expert was engaged, who travelled to Tbilisi and Western Georgia and to Abkhazia in September.

## 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

He helped the participants assess the infestation and develop strategies in response to the pest. In the margins of the round the expert met with Georgian and Abkhaz colleagues to further his discussions with them and a plan was agreed to organize an expert meeting in the margins of the December round, with the involvement of Abkhaz, Ossetian, Russian and international experts. This broader meeting would have the ambition to share experiences and views on the issues, and to explore options for practical cooperation.

# 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

An information session was held for participants on the issue of protection of cultural heritage with a presentation by an expert from UNESCO on the subject. The topic of the session developed on previous work on cultural heritage, where the focus has been mainly on material cultural heritage, including monuments and artefacts.



## 33rd round of the Geneva Discussions

The session also highlighted the importance of intangible cultural heritage, a concept that was of interest to the participants in the context of the debate on languages and education. Participants agreed to explore options for inviting experts associated with UNESCO to support their work on monuments of shared cultural patrimony.





# The EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia

# EU Monitoring Mission

An unarmed civilian monitoring mission of the European Union.

Deployed in September 2008 following the EU-mediated Six Point Agreement which ended the August war.

Head of Mission: Ambassador Kęstutis Jankauskas

Mission current budget: EUR 18.300.000

Contributing states: all EU Member States

# EU Monitoring Mission

## Former Heads of Mission:

- Mr. Toivo Klaar, September 2013 - December 2014
- Ambassador Andrzej Tyszkiewicz, July 2011-June 2013
- Ambassador Hansjörg Haber, October 2008-April 2011

# EU Monitoring Mission

The Mission's tasks are:

- To ensure that there is no return to hostilities;
- To facilitate the resumption of a safe and normal life for the local communities living on both sides of the Administrative Boundary Lines (ABL) with Abkhazia and South Ossetia;
- To build confidence among the conflict parties;
- To inform EU policy in Georgia and the wider region

# EU Monitoring Mission

Ever since Mission deployment it has been patrolling day and night, particularly in the areas adjacent to the ABLs with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The mission has around 200 monitors from various EU Member States working on the ground.

Headquarters are in Tbilisi and Field Offices in Gori, Mtskheta and Zugdidi.

Mission's mandate is valid throughout all of Georgia. However, the de facto authorities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia have so far denied us access to the territories under their control.



# EU Monitoring Mission



# EU Monitoring Mission

- The EUMMM provided a ‘security chapeau’ to the entire EU engagement in the field.
- This has added a dimension of leverage (albeit not decisive) to mediation and dialogue at other levels.
- With a very limited mandate and no access to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the EUMMM succeeded in being perceived as the major guarantor of security vis-à-vis Russia in the area.



## EU Monitoring Mission reporting

The situation in Georgia (GE) along the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) remained relatively calm during September 2015. One alleged (non) shooting incident was reported near Ioncha village in South Ossetia (SO) on 23 September, when a man was injured.

The Mission's assessment of the incident, based on information available, was that the injury was most likely not the result of shooting. The incident was heavily publicised by the SO side to accuse the GE side of cross-ABL violence.

## EU Monitoring Mission reporting

The Mission is unable to verify when and by whom this sign might have been removed.

There was no hotline activation regarding this removal. According to the TAT side, 153 persons from TAT lost access to 58 ha of land in SO during this summer because of continued borderisation activities.

## EU Monitoring Mission reporting

Of some significance is the indication of a special operation conducted by joint Russian Federation (RF) Border Guard (BG) and ABK *de facto* police units to prevent uncontrolled ABL crossings in the Khurcha/Nabakevi area.

## EU Monitoring Mission reporting

The beginning of the school year has brought changes in the language of instruction in the Gali district, at the expense of Georgian-language education. The Mission monitored the freedom of movement of schoolchildren in both theatres and concluded that no major impediments were in place to cross the ABL.

## EU Monitoring Mission reporting

Both *de facto* “Treaties” between the breakaway regions and the RF continue to be implemented, the major development being the announcement by the RF Deputy PM that nine agreements between the RF and SO would be signed pursuant to the socio-economic provisions of the *de facto* ‘Treaty on Alliance and Integration’ by the end of the year.

## EU Monitoring Mission reporting

Head of EUMMM visits Moscow on September 2015

The security situation on the ground in Georgia, along the ABL with South Ossetia and Abkhazia, was discussed.

Issues of borderisation, freedom of movement, access of local population to agricultural land as well as military exercises are raised and discussed as are practical issues such as interaction in the field between security actors.

Commitment of all sides to use the existing instruments such as the IPRM meetings and the Hotline was stressed in order to maintain stability and predictability on the ground. Head of EUMMM visited Moscow last time in 2011.



# Incident prevention & response mechanism (IPRM)



# Incident prevention & response mechanism

- The role of the IPRM is in building confidence between parties and addressing the concerns of conflict-affected communities in a pragmatic manner.
- Monthly meetings are co-facilitated by the Head of the EU Monitoring Mission and the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-office for the South Caucasus.

# Incident prevention & response mechanism

The main goals are:

- to review the current security situation along the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) discuss safety measures intended to avoid any misunderstandings regarding agricultural and other works as well as patrolling in the vicinity of the ABL.
- to exchange information concerning the situation of prisoners and missing persons. Problems caused by the installation of fences and other obstacles for the local communities are usually raised.



# Incident prevention & response mechanism



# Incident prevention & response mechanism

On 23rd September 2015, the 58th meeting under the IPRM took place in Ergneti, co-facilitated by the Head of the EUMMM in Georgia and Ambassador Angelo Gnaedinger, the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for the South Caucasus.



# Incident prevention & response mechanism

The security situation was assessed as stable, and specific incidents along the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) were discussed. Constructive discussions were held especially regarding access to land for local farmers; it was agreed to keep this issue under review. Participants committed to increase vigilance and to intensify the exchange of relevant information in relation to wildfires on both sides of the ABL. The next IPRM meeting will take place on 29th October.

# Incident prevention & response mechanism

SO participants notified the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) meeting of 23 September of impending military exercises in the Znauri district. RF troop movements from ABK were reported during the period, which were assessed by EUMM as being related to the Ukrainian and/or Syrian contexts.



Let's wrap up the lecture



Today we discussed

Main tools used by the EU  
and International community  
for solving the conflicts in Georgia

## Next lecture

### **Main tools used by the EU and International community for solving the conflict over Nagorno Karabakh**

Role in the mediation of the OSCE Minsk Group on Nagorno-Karabakh conflict,  
its basic objectives  
frequency of meetings, the main issues a track record in conflict resolution  
the perspectives of other development