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PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT ON THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION'S SO-CALLED "AGREEMENT ON THE STATE BORDER" WITH GEORGIA'S BREAKAWAY REGION OF SOUTH OSSETIA

As delivered by Counsellor Hilde Austad
to the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 5 May 2016

Mr Chairman,

This statement is on behalf of Canada, Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway.

Mr Chairman,

We deeply regret the Russian Federation's ratification of the so-called "Agreement on the State Border" with Georgia's breakaway region of South Ossetia. Like previous so-called "treaties", this agreement is a clear violation of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and has no legal standing.

We are also concerned by the de facto authorities of South Ossetia planning to hold a referendum on joining the Russian Federation. This would be yet another unacceptable violation of international law that we would not recognise. We urge the de facto authorities of South Ossetia to reverse their plans, and we call on Russian authorities to speak out against the planned referendum.

Mr Chairman,

We take this opportunity to underline the need for re-establishing a robust OSCE presence in Georgia, with a mandate covering the entirety of the country and all three dimensions. We would also welcome increased engagement from the autonomous institutions, and we encourage ODIHR and the HCNM to follow up on their 2008 report on the situation in the breakaway regions.

We reiterate our call for unimpeded access for OSCE representatives and other international observers to the entire territory of Georgia – notably including the breakaway regions, which represent particular challenges when it comes to

respect for OSCE commitments. We fully acknowledge that access to Abkhazia and South Ossetia requires the cooperation not only of Georgian authorities. We call on all parties involved to ensure unhindered access to the breakaway regions.

Mr Chairman,

We confirm our full support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. We call on the Russian Federation to fulfil its obligations under the 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement and its subsequent Implementing Measures.

Thank you, Mr Chairman