



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT ON THE DECISION TO HOLD A REFERENDUM IN THE BREAKAWAY TSKHINVALI REGION OF GEORGIA

As delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad
to the Permanent Council
Vienna, 16 February 2017

Mr Chair,

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

Our countries fully support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia. We have previously spoken out in this forum against actions that violate this sovereignty and territorial integrity, such as the so-called “agreements” between Russia and Georgia’s breakaway regions that further integrate the regions into Russia’s governing structures, the “borderisation” of the administrative boundary line, and the planned so-called “referendum” in South Ossetia on joining the Russian Federation.

We share Georgia’s concern over the plans to hold an illegal and illegitimate “referendum” on changing the name of the region after the model of the Russian republic North Ossetia. We understand fully why Georgia sees this as a further step in a gradual integration process. Such a step would not bring the conflict closer to a solution, it would be a step in the opposite direction.

Let me 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.

We urge Russia and the de-facto authorities of the breakaway regions to refrain from actions that violate Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. We again reiterate our call on the Russian Federation to live up to its commitments from the ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 and the subsequent implementing measures.

Thank you, Mr Chair