



Statement by H.E. Mr. Kaha Imnadze
Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations
United Nations General Assembly
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Madame President,
Excellences,
Distinguished Delegates,

I'm standing at this high podium to bring you the voices of 400 000 forcibly displaced persons from my country, Georgia. But I also stand here to bring the voices of those displaced from Syria, from Venezuela, from Myanmar and elsewhere. I say so, because the Georgian voices are no different from those 70 million displaced around the globe today. Because, while the cause for displacement may differ, the human suffering remains the same!

Therefore, dear Colleagues,

I stand here to introduce draft Resolution A/73/L.89 "Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia" under Agenda Item 35 "Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development", sponsored by Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Eswatini, Finland, France,

Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sweden, Tonga, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, and I'm asking for your support.

The resolution before you emanates from the Guiding Principles of Internal Displacement and constitutes a collective call for adherence of 3 fundamental principles:

- securing the rights of the displaced, including the right to safe and dignified return; as well as property rights;
- Unacceptability of forced demographic changes; and
- the need for unimpeded humanitarian access.

The resolution underlines the importance and supports the work of the Geneva International Discussions – the GID – the negotiation format between Georgia and Russia mandated by the 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement and co-chaired by the United Nations, the European Union and OSCE.

Sadly, Georgia's unwavering commitment to and its constructiveness within the GID, remains to be a one way street, hence a decade old stalemate because of the policy of concerted disrespect towards the issue of return by relevant participants. Despite continued calls by the UN Secretary-General for the "cessation of "walkouts" during the discussion on the IDP and refugees within the GID.

Distinguished Delegates,

Security and human rights situation inside the occupied Georgian territories remain extremely alarming. Year after year, we continue to witness the installation of razor-wire fences and the so-called “border” signs cutting through the villages and even backyards of the residents. These installations reached an appalling 49 km in Abkhazia region and more than 52 km in the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, as also condemned by the Secretary-General in his latest report.

The UN Human Rights Council through its resolutions has also been expressing its continuous concern and calling for immediate access of human rights monitoring mechanisms to the occupied territories, but they still remain as “black holes” where impunity and lawlessness reign and grave human rights violations are routine.

People endure kidnappings, arbitrary detentions, seizure of property, as well as continued discrimination on the grounds of ethnic origin including severe restrictions on free movement and residence, and access to education in their native language.

It is heartbreaking to see the Secretary-General’s latest report referring to “tragic loss of life” of the Georgian IDPs while in detention by the occupying power. Such cases are far too often and far too many: Basharuli, Otkhozoria, Tatumashvili, Kvaratskhelia. Each year I give a name of a new victim hoping to be the last but the list never stops to grow.

Excellences,

Despite all impediments on the ground, the Government of Georgia remains committed to peaceful reconciliation. Its peace initiative - “A Step to a Better Future”, aims at:

- enhancing the interaction between the divided societies;
- facilitating and expanding trade across the occupation line;

- creating additional opportunities and simplifying access to all levels of education;
- and easing access to various services and benefits.

Georgia firmly believes that reconciliation and reintegration, along with commitment to rules-based order and surge in diplomacy are the only means to achieve sustainable peace.

Dear colleagues,

Last year marked 20th anniversary of the guiding principles on internal displacement and this year it is ten years since the adoption of the 2009 AU Convention for the Protection of IDP's in Africa (the Kampala Convention).

It is no coincidence that Africa Dialogue Series meeting held at UN merely week ago, had forced displacement as the overarching priority theme, where Secretary-General António Guterres, urged member states - “to consider the issue of displacement in the broadest context, in your search for sustainable and durable solutions.”

While the resolution before you refers to the situation in a single country, the issue at stake is an integral part of a global challenge - forced displacement. And to address them we need to be principled and not bound by narrow regional scope.

In these chambers, we all recognize the utterly humanitarian nature of the principle of return. Therefore, we appeal to you to apply the very same principle to the IDPs from Georgia. They too are the part of **our** global endeavor to “leave no one behind’.

Now it is time for us, the General Assembly to show firm adherence to these principles, and demonstrate our joint commitment to Sustainable Peace.

We need to continue sending the message of hope to the hundreds of thousands of victims of forced displacement.

Therefore, I once again urge you to vote “Yes” on the Resolution A/73/L.89 and to recognize, once again that internally displaced people do have their right to return.

I thank you.