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THE EFFECTS OF THE AUGUST WAR

who is doing what to address them and how is this affecting people's lives

The war in August 2008 affected the lives of many people – they lost loved ones, homes, jobs and sources of income. In other cases, the influence may be indirect but still painful. Two years after the war, the issues that lay at the heart of the conflict are still unresolved and the sense of uncertainty about the future adds to the damage inflicted by the war.

THE EFFECTS OF THE AUGUST WAR



questions and answers



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Different actors influence the conflicts and the potential for peace. This includes the Governments of Georgia and Russia, the international community (represented, for instance, by the European Union), the de facto authorities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and international and Georgian non-governmental organisations. Their visions for how to solve the issues causing the conflict may be radically different, but their policies affect the lives of communities in one way or the other.

Over the past year, Saferworld, an international non-governmental organisation, and its Georgian partners – the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association and the Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy, and Development – have worked with people in different regions of Georgia to share their experiences

of the conflict, to understand the reasons behind it and to identify ways of ensuring future peace, security and stability. It became clear that people do not know enough about the policies, plans, and responsibilities of the different actors on whom their lives and livelihoods depend. This can be a source of resentment, disappointment and sometimes even conflict.

We decided to produce a short booklet that answers some of the questions raised, by summarising the policies and actions of different actors and how they influence the everyday lives of people. We believe this comes at an important time, as the assistance provided by the international community following the war – usually called the 'international crisis response' – comes to an end in 2011, potentially making lives more difficult for those affected by the conflict.



What are the names of the conflict areas?

The parties to the conflict use different language and spelling to refer to the respective areas. For example, while the de facto Government in Tskhinvali refers to the area under its control as 'South Ossetia', the Georgian Government refers to it as 'the Tskhinvali region'. In addition, while the de facto Government of Abkhazia spells the name of its main town as 'Sukhum', the Georgian Government refers to it as 'Sukhumi'. This booklet uses international norms for both language and spelling.

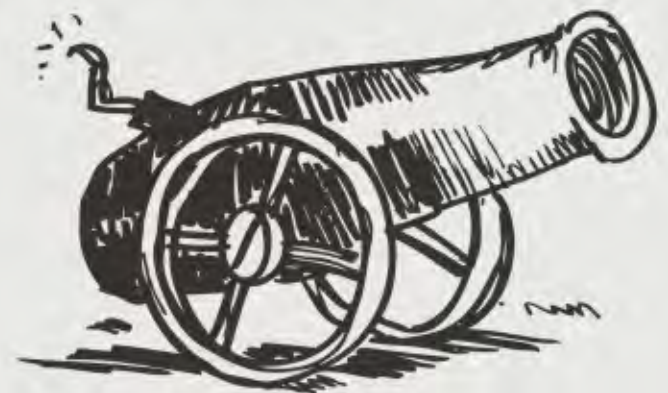
HOW DO THE MAIN ACTORS UNDERSTAND THE CONFLICT?

There are four main actors who play important roles in the conflicts: the Governments of Georgia and Russia, the international community – that is, the states and international organisations that support efforts to address the causes and consequences of the war – and the de facto Governments of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. These players have widely divergent views on the nature of the conflict, and visions of what future 'resolution' and 'peace' means – which explains in part why the war happened in the first place.

The **Government of Georgia** considers Abkhazia and South Ossetia to be integral parts of Georgia, and residents of those regions, whatever their origin or political views, to be Georgian citizens.

It believes that the war in August 2008 was an act of aggression by Russia with the aim of occupying Georgia's territory, changing its government and forcing the country to change its political direction. Georgia considers Abkhazia and South Ossetia to be territories under unlawful Russian occupation. This means that Georgia considers the Russian military presence there, as well as the activities of the de facto Abkhazian and Ossetian authorities, to be illegal. As a result, all official Georgian documents refer to Abkhazia and South Ossetia as 'Occupied Territories'.

At the same time, the Georgian Government has committed to peaceful resolution of the conflict. It took an obligation not to use force in order to restore its jurisdiction over Abkhazia and South Ossetia even though it considers such an action lawful. Moreover, it has stated its readiness to meet with Russia's leadership and discuss any issues related to the conflict without preconditions.





What is meant by 'war' and 'conflict'?

When people talk about the 'August war', they are talking about the military actions and violence in 2008. When people talk about the 'conflict' or the 'conflicts', they mean the disagreements that caused this violence and may continue after the hostilities end. These disagreements are between the Georgian Government and Russian Government, but also between Tbilisi and the de facto Governments in Sukhumi and Tskhinvali, and even between Russia and the Western international community. While the ceasefire agreed in August/September 2008 ended the war and the violence, it did not resolve the disagreements. This means that the conflict is still ongoing. It also means that violence and war could happen again in the future.



The **Russian Government** considers Georgia as the aggressor in the August 2008 war and justifies its actions during the war as protecting people in South Ossetia from 'genocide' – that means mass extermination of ethnic Ossetians. It has recognised Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states and considers both conflicts to be principally resolved. It refers to this as the 'new reality'.

Due to the 'new reality' Russia considers the agreements that regulated the conflicts before August 2008, including its presence in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, to be no longer relevant. This means the Russian Government believes it can deploy its troops and build military bases in these regions solely on the basis of agreements between itself and the authorities in Sukhumi and Tskhinvali. The Russian Government believes that Georgia, as well as the international community, should accept this 'new reality'. As a first step, Georgia should commit to never using force to resolve the conflict, and sign agreements with the authorities of Sukhumi and Tskhinvali. Russia also wants the international community to recognise Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states.

The Russian leaders refuse to have any contacts with the leaders of the current Georgian Government, and state that Georgia should negotiate directly with Tskhinvali and Sukhumi, though they do not exclude having contacts with other Georgian governments at some point in the future.

The **de facto Governments in Abkhazia and South Ossetia** agree with

the position of the Russian Government. They consider Georgia to be a foreign state and any movement of Georgians into their territory, if it is not sanctioned by their governments, to be illegal. They believe that the possibility of future Georgian military aggression against them is the main issue that still remains to be resolved. These governments also object to the return of Georgian internally displaced persons that were displaced as a result of the August war and the fighting in the early 1990s (save for ethnic-Georgians residing in the Gali district).



The **'international community'** refers to the countries and international organisations, such as the United Nations and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), that have been involved in efforts to manage and resolve the conflicts from the beginning of 1990s. International actors support Georgia's 'territorial integrity' – that is, they consider Abkhazia and South Ossetia to be legally part of Georgia. This means that the international community disagrees with Russia's position, objects to the presence of Russian troops in the region, and considers Russia in breach of the ceasefire agreements that ended the 2008 war.

At the same time, different countries have different understandings of the responsibilities of Russia and Georgia for the August war – with some strongly supporting Georgia's actions and some being more critical of the Georgian Government. This means that statements and actions by the international community can sometimes be confusing.

The international community insists that any efforts to resolve conflict should be peaceful and take into account the interests of all people affected by it, including those living in Abkhazia and South Ossetia today. This means that it supports engagement with people living in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and opposes isolation of these regions.

Who caused the August War – the findings of the ‘Tagliavini Commission’

‘...there is no way to assign overall responsibility for the conflict to one side alone. They have all failed, and it should be their responsibility to make good for it.’

Because of the different understandings of the August 2008 war – how it started and who is responsible – the European Union established an Independent International Fact-Finding Mission into the war. This Mission is known as the ‘Tagliavini Commission’ and released its findings in September 2009 after a year of research. The main findings of the report are summarised opposite.



The war was not caused by any individual actions in the days before the violence, but was the result of a longer process of 'increasing tensions, provocations and incidents' on all sides.



All sides were partially to blame for the war, including the international community, which failed to 'act swiftly and resolutely enough in order to control the ever-mounting tensions'.

The conflict is complex and has international, national and local dynamics.



The peacekeeping mechanisms and peace processes agreed after the violence in the early 1990s had stopped being effective.



Opportunities were lost to build peace and not enough attention was paid to 'building mutual trust promoting reconciliation'.



All sides breached international law, humanitarian law and human rights during the violence.

WHAT IS DONE TO REGULATE THE CONFLICT AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL?

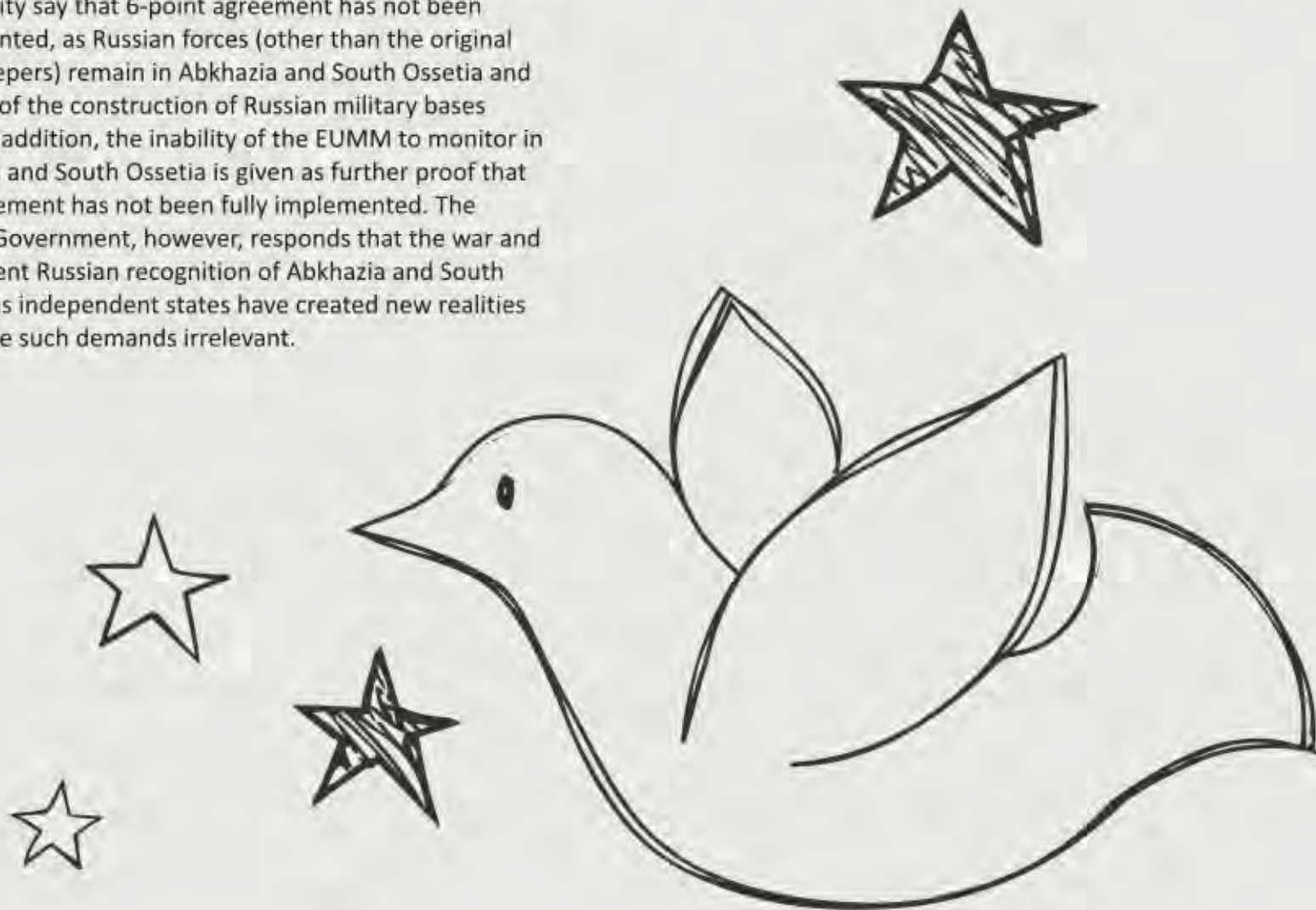
The way the international community tries to regulate the conflict is different as a result of the August war. Before the war, the OSCE was the main organisation responsible for monitoring the conflict in South Ossetia, while the United Nations Mission to Georgia (UNOMIG) was responsible for monitoring the conflict in Abkhazia. In addition, two separate negotiation processes were established to resolve these conflicts. UNOMIG and OSCE are no longer represented in Abkhazia and South Ossetia because Russia has a power of veto in these organisations and it objects to their presence there. As a result, the European Union now has the main responsibility for regulating the conflict.

The war in August 2008 was ended by **two ceasefire agreements** negotiated by President Nicolas Sarkozy of France (who acted on behalf of the EU since France held the presidency of the European Union at the time) with his Russian and Georgian counterparts, Dmitry Medvedev and Mikheil Saakashvili. The ceasefire was based on the principles that all troops return to the positions they had held before the war started and that all contested issues (such as the status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia) would be resolved by negotiations.

The ceasefire was successful in that it ended the armed hostilities and prevented further large-scale violence. It also established the two main mechanisms for managing the conflict – the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) and the Geneva negotiation process.




In the eyes of the international community, the conditions set by the agreements are the starting point for achieving sustainable peace in the region. However, the parties disagree on what specific obligations they entail. The Georgian Government as well as many in the international community say that 6-point agreement has not been implemented, as Russian forces (other than the original peacekeepers) remain in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and because of the construction of Russian military bases there. In addition, the inability of the EUMM to monitor in Abkhazia and South Ossetia is given as further proof that the agreement has not been fully implemented. The Russian Government, however, responds that the war and subsequent Russian recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states have created new realities that make such demands irrelevant.





What do the ceasefire agreements say?

There were in fact two ceasefire agreements,  an initial agreement on 12 August 2008 and an implementation agreement on 8 September 2008. The initial ceasefire agreement had six main points, and is as a result most often referred to as the 'six-point agreement'. It obliges the conflicting parties to:

- Refrain from the use of force
- End hostilities permanently
- Provide access to humanitarian aid
- Ensure Georgian military forces return to their normal bases
- Ensure Russian military forces return to their pre-war positions; and until agreement of a security mechanism provide security in those areas where they are based
- Start negotiation on future security and stability arrangements for Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Although the violence stopped, Russia's military forces did not return to their original positions and negotiations did not start. This led to the 8 September 2008 agreement, which was much more specific and established the EUMM to monitor implementation of the agreements and the Geneva negotiation process, with a first meeting on 15 October 2008.



Text of the ceasefire agreements

http://smr.gov.ge/en/tskhinvali_region/legal_documents/2008_events/6_point_agreement

<http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=19435&search=six-point%20agreement>

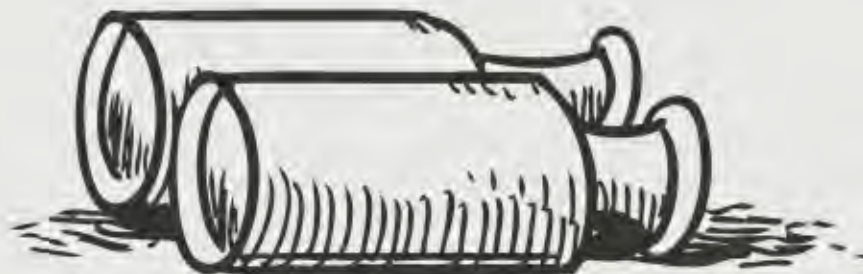
The European Union Monitoring Mission's

work is to monitor implementation of the ceasefire agreements, the situation in the conflict areas and that of conflict-affected communities, and to inform the European Union on any developments that may threaten the current peace. In addition, the EUMM is mandated to help increase dialogue and trust between people who live on both sides of the dividing line, because such contacts serve as an additional guarantee that hostilities do not erupt again.

The EUMM has limited ability to solve problems that may emerge where it monitors and that people encounter in their everyday lives. It is not a 'peacekeeping' or 'security' force and cannot directly intervene to protect people or stop violence. In addition, the EUMM is denied access to the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and cannot monitor the situation on the other side of the dividing lines. This often leads to frustration on the part of people affected by the conflict, because they do not understand how the EUMM helps them. The work it does is extremely valuable because it ensures that the European Union and, more broadly, the international community has reliable information on developments in the conflict areas. This is important so that the EU and international community take the right actions to prevent violence and support peace. Without the EUMM, the threat of new armed hostilities would be much greater.



Information on the EUMM'S mandate
www.eumm.eu



While maintaining the ceasefire is important, long-term sustainable peace requires all parties to the conflict to reach an agreement on how to resolve it. For this, they regularly meet in Geneva – this series of meetings is called the **'Geneva Process'**. The European Union, the OSCE and the United Nations serve as co-chairs of the Geneva process. Representatives of Georgia and Russia, as well as of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, participate in the talks. The talks in Geneva are focused on two issues. The first is how to provide security, including measures like agreements not to use force in the future, the establishment of international peacekeeping and policing operations, and safe movement across the administrative boundary lines. The second is to agree on how to meet humanitarian needs, including the needs of internally displaced people and refugees, and protection of their rights. Two separate working groups meet

during the Geneva negotiations to discuss these two issues.

Unfortunately, there has been little progress in reaching agreement on these two issues. Georgia demands that Russia withdraw its troops from Abkhazia and South Ossetia and that they are replaced with an international police force – something that the Russian Government rejects. Meanwhile Russia, Sukhumi and Tskhinvali demand that Georgia should sign an agreement with the de facto Governments of Abkhazia and South Ossetia committing it to the non-use of force, before discussing other issues. The Georgian Government declares its general commitment to peaceful resolution of the conflict, but says that it is pointless to sign any agreements with the authorities in Sukhumi and Tskhinvali while the situation on the ground is controlled by Russian troops.



What is the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism?

While progress in the Geneva Process has been limited, the sides did agree on establishing an Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism. This mechanism involves a series of meetings between Georgia, Russian military forces and representatives of the de facto Governments in Abkhazia and South Ossetia to discuss recent security incidents, upcoming potential problems and to develop practical solutions. The meetings are facilitated by the EUMM, United Nations and the OSCE. These meetings are extremely important for responding to local security needs and for discussing issues of concern to local communities.





How does the Geneva process help?

Many people ask – ‘what is the point of negotiations if there are no tangible results or even credible hope of achieving them?’ There are grounds for scepticism, but if the parties to the conflict do not talk to each other, there are greater chances of renewed hostilities. Even if relatively small issues related to the life of communities are solved – or at least, things are not getting worse – the negotiations are worth holding. Over the last year the number of violent incidents in the conflict areas has reduced and renewal of armed conflict between Georgia and Russia is less likely. This makes the life of people who live close to the dividing lines more secure. If this is the case, it suggests that the Geneva negotiations have had a positive effect.

The discussions are also made more difficult by disagreements over who should be negotiating. Moscow, Sukhumi and Tskhinvali insist that negotiations are between Georgia on the one hand and Sukhumi and Tskhinvali on the other; Georgia insists that it should negotiate mostly with Moscow. Moreover, it is the belief of the Georgian government that if the authorities of

Sukhumi and Tskhinvali are part of the process, there should be a place at the negotiation table for the bodies who, in Tbilisi’s view, are the legitimate representatives of communities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia – the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia and the Temporary Administration of South Ossetia. This, in its turn, is unacceptable for Moscow, Sukhumi and Tskhinvali.

WHAT IS THE GEORGIAN GOVERNMENT DOING ABOUT THE CONFLICT?

The Georgian Government's overall goals are to restore effective Georgian control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia, to make possible the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons – people who lost their homes as a result of the wars – and meet the needs of all the people affected by the conflict, and to ensure security for the country and people living in it. How the Government tries to achieve these goals is based on the understanding that a swift resolution of the conflict is highly unlikely, and that any progress can only be achieved by peaceful means, and through negotiations with all relevant actors. This approach is sometimes described as 'strategic patience'.

Measures to restore control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia

In policy terms, the Georgian Government pursues two main objectives to help restore effective control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia – 'non-recognition' and 'engagement'.

'Non-recognition' means that the Government tries to discourage other countries from recognising Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states. This is considered important as it means the potential remains for a negotiated solution to the conflict that keeps Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia and will see IDPs returning to their homes. **The Ministry of Foreign Affairs**  has primary responsibility for ensuring other countries do not recognise South Ossetia through diplomacy.


The aim of 'engagement' is to maintain contact between Georgians living in Georgian-controlled territory and the people who live in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This policy is considered important as most of these people may have negative attitudes towards Georgia and do not welcome the prospect of restoring Georgian control where they live. This means that resolution of the conflict will depend upon reconciliation with these people, whatever their ethnic origin or political views.



In Georgia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department of International Organisations handles the Geneva Process.
Tel: 94-50-00 ext. 1803/04; e-mail: intorg@mfa.gov.ge

Therefore, while the fundamental issues of the conflict may stay unresolved for some time, the policy of 'engagement' seeks to restore human contacts and trust between people who used to live in the same society. To implement this policy the Georgian government has developed a Strategy – 'Engagement through cooperation' – and Action Plan that identifies specific ways of encouraging engagement. These include humanitarian actions (for instance, measures to reduce harm from natural disasters and epidemics), actions to improve relations between communities (including mutual visits to family events like births, weddings or funerals, or contacts between non-governmental organisations, professional groups or journalists), support for the preservation of Abkhaz and Ossetian culture and

identity, support for human rights on both sides of the dividing line, education of young people from Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgian institutions, and joint economic activities.

The Strategy and Action Plan are meant to balance restrictions in the 'Law on Occupied Territories', but do not invalidate them. In practice this means that in order to carry out any activities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, international or Georgian organisations will have to obtain a statement of non-objection from the Georgian Government. **The Office of the State Minister for Reintegration**  is responsible for encouraging engagement and issuing such statements.



What does the 'Law on Occupied Territories' do?




The Georgian Government considers Abkhazia and South Ossetia to be under Russian occupation. Therefore, it established a legal regime for interaction with these territories through the Law on the Occupied Territories. This law restricts movement and business activities with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. For instance, foreigners can only enter these regions from Georgian-controlled territory. Crossing the border to Abkhazia and South Ossetia from Russia is considered illegal and may be punished by law. The law bars any business activities by foreign companies or organisations that are not agreed with the Georgian Government. The law also stipulates that there may be exceptions, such as humanitarian crises – but they should have specific justification and this justification should be approved by the Georgian Government.



The Office of the State Minister for Reintegration
 Tel: **99 58 34** (head of administration); **99 53 88** (issues related to Abkhazia and South Ossetia);
98 81 05 (international organisations and projects); website: www.smr.gov.ge/en/home

Meeting the needs of internally displaced persons and conflict-affected communities

Approximately 250,000 people, or about 6 percent of Georgia's population, are registered as 'internally displaced people' (IDPs) from Abkhazia and South Ossetia – this means that they left their homes because of the conflict and are unable to return. 26,000 of these people became displaced as a result of the August 2008 war; the rest were displaced during the violence in Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the 1990s.

The Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees (MIAR)  is

responsible for developing and implementing state policy towards these people.

National policy towards IDPs has changed over the last couple of years and present policy is that people that lost their homes should have the same livelihood opportunities as any other citizen of the country. In other words, the aim is to overcome the dependence of IDPs on the Government and international aid. At present all registered IDPs get 28 laris per month on their debit cards. In addition, they may receive other kinds of help from the Government – for instance, they are paid for some of the electricity they consume (100 kW per person) as well as other utility bills. The MIAR is also responsible for improving the living conditions of the IDPs in other ways – for instance, by improving infrastructure (for example water supplies, irrigation and drainage system) in the areas where IDPs live.



Where do IDPs live?

For years, the majority of IDPs did not own their own accommodation but lived in spaces that were considered temporary shelters, for which they did not have any ownership rights. Living conditions in these shelters are extremely poor, and in many ways they became part of the social stigma of being a 'refugee'. The Government has now committed to providing IDPs with homes that they own. For the tens of thousands of people who lost their homes in the 2008 war, the Government (with international funding) built small houses or provided them with accommodation in existing but renovated buildings. The main policy for the larger number of IDPs who lost their homes in the early 1990s is to transfer spaces where IDPs already live into their private ownership. Where this is not possible, the Government provides other accommodation, after having renovated it. If people are not satisfied with the quality of proposed houses, they may appeal to the MIAR and negotiate a better solution.

Aside from official IDPs, there are a number of people and communities who continue to directly suffer from the conflict – most notably those who live in Shida Kartli along the ABL with South Ossetia, and the ethnic Georgians that live in the Akhgori area (in South Ossetia) and those that live in Gali (in Abkhazia).

While there is no fixed policy for the people living along **the administrative boundary line (ABL) with South Ossetia**, the Georgian Government has taken a number of ad hoc measures to assist these people. For example, it has worked on restoring local infrastructure damaged by the war, providing compensation for those that lost their homes, providing limited amounts of firewood support for the winter periods and covered scholarships for students who come from those areas. However, the overall approach of the Georgian Government is that families should not be dependent on direct government aid but that proper conditions should be created for them so that they can live in the same way as other citizens of the country.

Local government administrations, as well as agencies of the national Government

have a very important role in addressing specific issues related to their problems through fulfilling normal service-delivery functions. However, the success of any government agency depends on what resources they have. For instance, in the Shida Kartli region, one of the gravest problems created by the war is that of access to water for irrigation. Sources of water are often in territory not controlled by the Georgian Government. Therefore, in order to solve this problem, the Government has either to reach agreement with the de facto authorities, which may be difficult for political reasons, or develop a new irrigation system, which is a lengthy and costly process.



The Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees
Tel: **31 15 83** (department of IDP issues – for re-housing issues);
43 11 00 (hotline); fax: **31 15 96**;
website: http://mra.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG




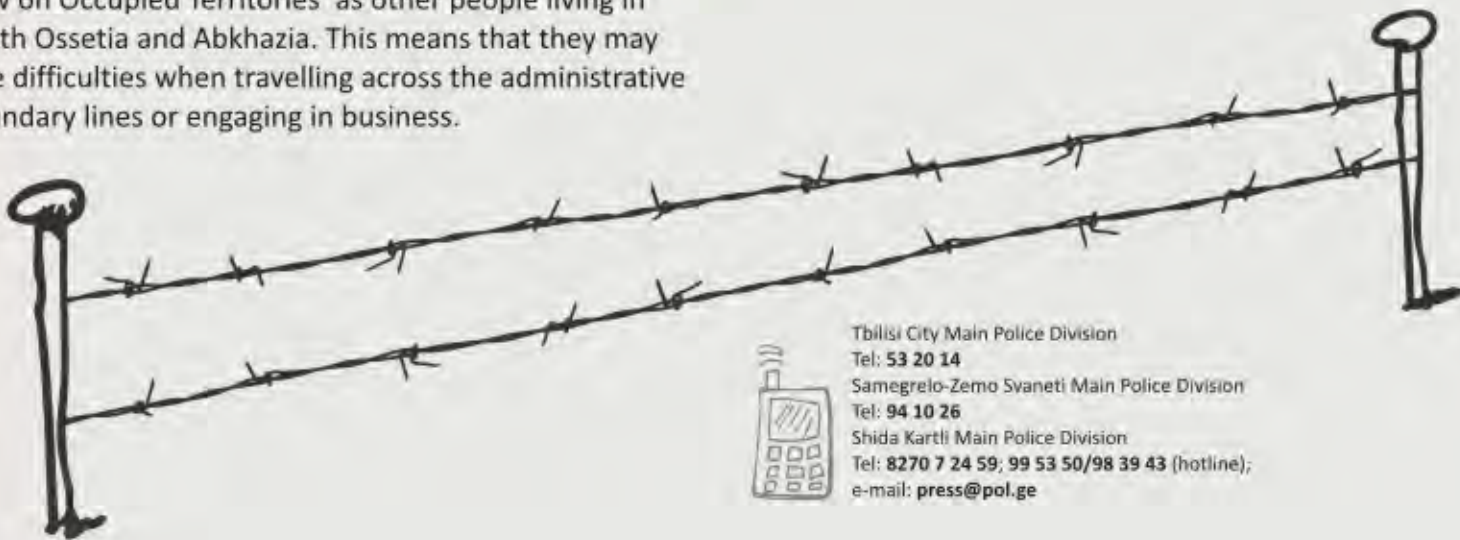
Shida Kartli Regional Administration
Tel: **8270 78010**; fax: **8270 79109**; website: www.gori.gov.ge
Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti Regional Administration
Tel: **315 50505**; fax: **315 50505**; e-mail: szs@szs.gov.ge;
web-site: www.szs.gov.ge

The Georgian government considers all **residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia**, whatever their ethnic background, to be its citizens, and hence eligible to the same social services (such as education and health) that are available to other Georgians.

It hopes that as mechanisms inherent in the engagement policy start to work, more people living in Abkhazia and South Ossetia will be able to take advantage of these services. At the same time, the Georgian Government has undertaken extra efforts to protect the rights of **ethnic-Georgians living in Akhagori and Gali**, to protect their relationships with friends and families in other parts of Georgia and because of the risk of discrimination from the Sukhumi and Tskhinvali authorities. For instance, they may have problems in getting education in their native language. However, as Georgian laws do not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity, ethnic-Georgians from these areas are subject to the same restrictions set out in the 'Law on Occupied Territories' as other people living in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. This means that they may face difficulties when travelling across the administrative boundary lines or engaging in business.

Providing security for the country

The **Ministry of Internal Affairs**,  **the Ministry of Defence and the National Security Council** (which advises the Government on security policy) are responsible for maintaining security in Georgia, including in the areas bordering the conflict areas. The way that the MIA and MoD provide security is restricted by the ceasefire agreements and subsequent agreements signed with the EUMM, which limit the amount of troops and how they operate in the areas along the disputed areas. Army personnel are not allowed to be based or operate near Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Instead, the police are tasked with maintaining security there. This means that police operating along the divides have the difficult task of both ensuring national security and providing a normal policing and justice service to the communities living there.



Tbilisi City Main Police Division
Tel: **53 20 14**
Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti Main Police Division
Tel: **94 10 26**
Shida Kartli Main Police Division
Tel: **8270 7 24 59; 99 53 50/98 39 43** (hotline);
e-mail: press@pol.ge

The policy since August 2008 has been to **reduce the likelihood of serious security incidents** with Russian, Abkhaz and Ossetian security forces. This means that the Georgian police are less active in the immediate vicinity of the dividing line. While this leads to understandable concerns for people living there, because they do not feel protected, it is thought that conspicuous actions by the Georgian police in these regions may be considered as a provocation by the other sides and may contribute to increased tensions.

The police have to find a middle ground between ensuring security for citizens and avoiding a strong presence near the dividing line. This arrangement has worked relatively well since the August war, as the situation in the Shida Kartli region has stabilised with fewer security incidents over time.

In addition, the police operating along the administrative boundary lines have been tasked with ensuring implementation of the 'Law on Occupied Territories'. This means that they try and stop unauthorised crossing or trade across the administrative boundary lines.



What is an 'administrative boundary line'?

The Georgian Government and the international community refer to the dividing lines between Georgian-controlled territory and Abkhazia and South Ossetia as 'administrative boundary lines'.

This is because the Georgian Government as well as the vast majority of other states do not recognise Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states and hence do not recognise the dividing lines as international borders. The Russian Government and the de facto authorities consider these dividing lines to be 'borders'.

WHAT ARE THE RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT AND THE DE FACTO AUTHORITIES DOING?

The Russian Government and the de facto authorities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia have the overall goal of reinforcing the separation of the two conflict areas from Georgia. The approach taken to achieve this goal is based on the belief that their 'independence' cannot be reversed, and that it is only a matter of time before this is accepted.

The **Russian Government** has taken a number of steps to make the 'new reality' in Abkhazia and South Ossetia sustainable. Firstly, it tries to encourage other countries to recognise Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states. So far only three countries – Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Nauru – have done so. Secondly, Russia provides direct economic support to both Abkhazia and South Ossetia to decrease the reliance of people in these regions on trade with Georgian-controlled territory. Thirdly, Russia has increased the number of security forces in these territories, and especially border guards to in order to strengthen the de facto 'borders'.

While the de facto authorities mostly support the actions taken by the Russian Government, there are some differences in practice. The **de facto authorities in Sukhumi** allow for people to cross across the ceasefire line and support some international presence in Abkhazia. At the same time, there are differences in opinion among the de facto authorities on how to respond to the presence of ethnic-Georgians in Gali. Some think that they should be treated the same as other people in Abkhazia, so as to demonstrate that Abkhazia is a developed state. Others think that ethnic-Georgians should be discriminated against (for instance, by not being given voting rights) and encouraged to leave Abkhazia.

The **de facto authorities in South Ossetia**, in contrast to those in Abkhazia, have closed the administrative boundary line and are not allowing people to cross into or from Georgian-controlled territory. In addition, they have refused to allow international organisations to operate in South Ossetia, unless they enter from Russia – which would be in direct contradiction of the ‘Law on Occupied Territories’. This means that while a range of international organisations

continue to operate in Gali, international support to South Ossetia is mostly limited to that provided by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

In addition, there are differences in relations with Russia, with the de facto authorities in Abkhazia demonstrating a greater will to be a genuinely independent state. The de facto rulers of South Ossetia, on the other hand, do not stress their differences from the administration of the Russian Federation and are more heavily reliant on the involvement of Russian officials in running the territory – for example, some Russian officials occupy senior positions in Tskhinvali.



How does the Georgian Government plan to encourage engagement?



The Georgian Government wants to establish seven ways of supporting engagement with people in Abkhazia and South Ossetia:

1. A Status-Neutral liaison Mechanism to facilitate co-operation between the Georgian Government and the de facto authorities in Tskhinvali and Sukhumi.
2. Neutral identity and travel documents to allow people from Abkhazia and South Ossetia to travel internationally without violating Georgia’s laws and without obliging them to define their citizenship as ‘Georgian’.
3. A Trust Fund to finance activities that support people to people contacts.
4. A Joint Investment Fund to assist business ties across the divides.
5. A Co-operation agency to make it easier for people and organisations to interact across the dividing lines and solve problems that emerge.
6. A Financial Institution that will make it possible to carry out economic activities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, without associated financial transactions being illegal.
7. Integrated Social-Economic Zones in the boundary areas with Abkhazia and South Ossetia to develop businesses that will attract the participation of the population living across the divides.

WHAT IS THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY DOING?

When considering the involvement of the international community, it is helpful to divide it into their political and security actions, their humanitarian and development actions, and their reconciliation and peacebuilding actions.

Political and security actions

At the time of the violence, the main preoccupation of the international community was **to stop the war and, later, to maintain peace.**

Currently, the main goal of the international community is to prevent further violence and to encourage more helpful actions by the parties to the conflict. In particular, the international community exerts pressure on the Russian Government to fully comply with the 6-point cease-fire agreement, which implies the withdrawal of Russian troops, refraining from building new Russian military bases there and allowing the EUMM to carry out its monitoring function on the other side of the dividing lines in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. It also encourages Georgia to engage with people living in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and to continue its internal democratic reforms.



Humanitarian and development actions – the 'crisis response'

The aim of the international community at the time of the war and in the immediate aftermath of the cease-fire was to prevent a **humanitarian crisis** and reduce the suffering of people affected by the war. This included actions such as relief assistance for IDPs living in temporary shelters, and supplying food and medicines to hospitals. Such work is funded by different governments (e.g. Sweden and the US) and funds (e.g. the Asia Development Bank) and is implemented by a range of multilateral organisations (such as **UNDP / UNHCR**) and non-governmental organisations (such as World Vision or the Danish Refugee Council) that specialise in humanitarian relief.

Different organisations have their own goals, but they usually try to co-ordinate their efforts among themselves and with the Georgian Government, which has ultimate responsibility for taking care of its citizens. However, especially during the early stage of conflict, such co-ordination is usually very difficult and relief efforts may be disorganised. It can be frustrating for those directly affected, as they find it difficult to understand the different organisations and their objectives.



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What support is provided to people in Abkhazia and South Ossetia?

As well as the 'crisis response' in Georgian-controlled territory, the international community has provided important support for people living in Abkhazia and South Ossetia since the violence in the early 1990s. This support is mostly humanitarian and to meet key needs. While the crisis response to the impact of the August 2008 war is coming to an end, this international support for people in Abkhazia and South Ossetia continues – although, most of this assistance is focused on Abkhazia as few international aid agencies are able to travel into South Ossetia.

After the emergency response, Georgia received a generous **package of international assistance** in order to help compensate for the losses that the war had caused, and to help rebuild itself. Most of this aid was allocated to help people directly affected by the war – building housing and infrastructure for refugees or in the areas where people suffered from the war. The assistance also supported issues which the war affected indirectly but which could disrupt the life of people in the whole country. For instance the war created grave economic problems since investors were afraid to bring money to Georgia and people could not pay back their credits in banks. Therefore, a large amount of relief

money was put into programmes to stabilise the economy, in particular, in support of the banking sector.

This money was planned to be spent within three years. This means that a small part of the relief package remains to be spent. This assistance was very important for Georgia not only to overcome the results of the war, but also to soften the impact of the global economic crisis that started shortly after the war. The end of the crisis response is due in 2011, which means that Georgia and the Georgian Government will now have to finance the costs of the conflict's impacts with much less external assistance.




What is a 'crisis response' and what does it mean for Georgia?

When a crisis happens, such as a war or an earthquake, the international community attempts to respond to the human suffering caused and to stop further crises from happening. This response can involve emergency medical and food assistance, building homes for people who have lost theirs, as well as roads and, and helping businesses. Over recent years the international community has tried to get better at co-ordinating their response so it is more effective. This means that they jointly conduct an assessment of priority needs.

In October 2008, following such an assessment, the international community agreed to give US\$ 4,536 million to support the crisis response in Georgia over three years:

- US\$ 100 million for immediate humanitarian needs
- US\$ 350 million for those that had fled their homes in South Ossetia
- US\$ 2,647 to rebuilding Georgia's roads, buildings and economy
- US\$ 584 in direct monetary support to the Government's budget, and
- US\$ 583 million to support banks so they could continue to lend money.

Information about how exactly this money has been spent has not yet been made publically available. 



Reconciliation and peacebuilding actions

When it comes to reconciliation efforts, the international community not only works at the political and diplomatic levels (such as through the Geneva Process), but gives great importance to developing contacts and understanding between people who, as a result of the conflict, found themselves on different sides of the dividing lines. Such work may not bring immediate results but greater trust between people will make resumption of hostilities less likely, increase chances of eventual resolution, and may make it easier to resolve specific problems between the communities who live close to the dividing lines.

Reconciliation and peacebuilding actions designed by the international community may be implemented in different ways. Some are carried out in direct co-operation with the Georgian Government: international donors and Georgian authorities agree on specific programmes that are then funded or co-funded by the international donors but carried out by the Government. In other cases, donors may fund the activities of international or local non-governmental organisations that work independently to support reconciliation and peacebuilding actions.





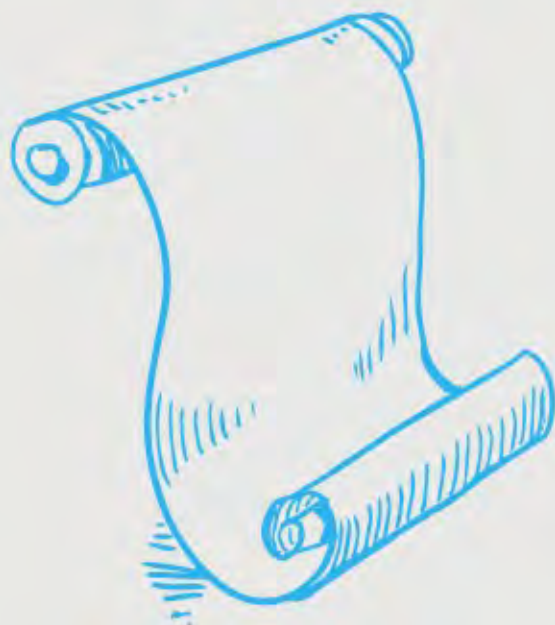
What do 'reconciliation' and 'peacebuilding' mean in practice?

The process of resolving other conflicts in the world has show that reconciliation and peacebuilding activities are important for supporting people to resolve disagreements. International and local organisations continue to support the following peacebuilding measures between Georgians and Russians, and between those living in Abkhazia / South Ossetia and in Georgian-controlled territory:

- Discussions between government representatives or between politicians
- Joint analysis and problem-solving by civil society organisations or experts
- Bringing young people together to share experiences
- Joint trainings and projects, in a wide range of fields including journalism, education, medicine and infrastructure (such as irrigation water and gas systems)
- Providing balanced information on conflict issues, especially across the divides.



NOTES





What is the programme *Promoting broader and more informed discussion on conflict, security and peace in Georgia*?



This booklet was prepared by CIPDD, GYLA and Saferworld in March 2011. It is part of an ongoing programme, part-funded by the UK Conflict Pool and the European Union's Instrument for Stability, to promote broader and more informed discussion on conflict, security and peace in Georgia.

The programme is designed to develop the capacity of Georgian civil society to analyse, and play a constructive role in policy development on these issues.

It involves a two-way conversation between representative groups and wider society in four target regions – Kvemo Kartli, Samegrelo, Samtskhe-Javakheti and Shida Kartli – to identify and plan how to address key region-specific challenges.

It also involves regular meetings between representatives of these regions at the national level, to share outcomes from their respective analyses, and to plan for shared national challenges.

For more information see the partners' websites, which can be found on the back cover.

People do not know enough about the policies, plans and responsibilities of the different actors who have a role in managing the conflicts affecting Georgia. This can be a source of resentment, disappointment and sometimes even tension. To help, the Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development, the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association and Saferworld decided to produce a short booklet that summarises the policies and actions of different actors and how they influence the everyday lives of people.

This booklet was funded by the UK Conflict Pool through the project 'Strengthen civil society-government dialogue on conflict and stability'.

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