



General Assembly

Distr.: General
4 May 2026

Original: English

Eightieth session

Agenda item 32

**Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications
for international peace, security and development**

Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [79/292](#), pertains to the status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia.

The report is focused, in particular, on the right of return of refugees and internally displaced persons and their descendants, the prohibition of forced demographic changes, humanitarian access, the preservation of the property rights of refugees and internally displaced persons and the development of a timetable to ensure the prompt voluntary return of all refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes.



I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [79/292](#), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its eightieth session a comprehensive report on the implementation of the resolution. The report covers the period from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 and draws on information received from several United Nations entities.

2. In accordance with the provisions of the resolution, the report is focused on: (a) the right of return of all refugees and internally displaced persons and their descendants, regardless of ethnicity; (b) the prohibition of forced demographic changes; (c) humanitarian access; (d) the importance of preserving the property rights of refugees and internally displaced persons; and (e) the development of a timetable to ensure the prompt voluntary return of all refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes.

II. Background

3. Following an escalation of conflict in 1992 and 1993, which caused significant displacement of civilians, armed hostilities between the Georgian and Abkhaz sides ended with the signing of the Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces in Moscow on 14 May 1994 (see [S/1994/583](#) and [S/1994/583/Corr.1](#)). That agreement was preceded by the signing of the Quadripartite Agreement on Voluntary Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons in Moscow on 4 April 1994 (see [S/1994/397](#)), in which the parties agreed to cooperate in planning and conducting activities to safeguard and guarantee the safe, secure and dignified return of people who had fled from areas in the conflict zone to the areas of their previous permanent residence. Armed hostilities between the Georgian and South Ossetian sides ended with the signing of the Sochi Agreement of 24 June 1992, which resulted in the establishment of a ceasefire between the Georgian and South Ossetian forces and the creation of the Joint Control Commission and Joint Peacekeeping Forces.

4. Following the hostilities that began in the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia on 7 and 8 August 2008, the six-point Ceasefire Agreement of 12 August 2008 and the implementing measures of 8 September 2008 ([S/2008/631](#), paras. 7–15), international discussions were launched in Geneva on 15 October 2008 under the co-chairpersonship of the United Nations, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) ([S/2009/69](#), paras. 5–7). The international discussions address the issues of security and stability and the return of internally displaced persons and refugees.

5. The United Nations continued to support the Geneva process, in consultation with the European Union and OSCE Co-Chairs. The United Nations is also responsible for convening the meetings of the joint Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism under United Nations auspices in Gali ([S/2009/254](#), paras. 5 and 6). By the end of the reporting period, neither the regular nor any ad hoc meetings could be held owing to disagreements among participants. The regular meetings of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism in Ergneti, co-facilitated jointly by OSCE and the European Union Monitoring Mission, continued, with eight meetings held during the reporting period.

6. To date, 66 rounds of the Geneva International Discussions have been held, with 3 rounds convened during the reporting period, on 25 and 26 June 2025, 11 and 12 November 2025 and 18 and 19 March 2026, respectively, with participants meeting in two working groups. Working Group I continued its constructive review

of the security situation on the ground, while advancing substantive discussion of the agenda item on the non-use of force and international security arrangements.

7. Working Group II continued to focus on the humanitarian needs of all affected populations, including their livelihoods, freedom of movement, documentation and access to rights and services, including education and health, and the issue of missing persons. Although all participants in Working Group II agreed that the issue of the return of internally displaced persons and refugees should be kept on the agenda, there was neither substantial discussion on nor progress made in addressing this important matter. “Walkouts” by some participants under this agenda item also continued. During the reporting period, there was no sustainable return to areas of origin or habitual residence.

8. The Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions and the co-moderators of Working Group II continued to call upon all participants to advance on core agenda items and keep the focus on conflict-affected populations. They continued to encourage measures to facilitate crossings of the administrative boundary line for family visits and access to medical services and educational opportunities and to allow visits to religious sites and graveyards, particularly during religious holidays. The crossing points at the Inguri Bridge and Saberio-Pakhulani villages continued to function without major interruption. In general, crossing points on the South Ossetian side continued to be open only during the last 10 days of each month. It is important, however, that the functioning of these crossing points revert to the practice that existed before September 2019, and that additional crossing points be opened for pedestrian use.

9. The Geneva International Discussions continued to offer an important opportunity for participants to engage on the issue of determining the fate of persons who went missing during the conflicts. The participants continued to show understanding for the plight of the families of the missing and commitment to engaging meaningfully on the issue, in particular by supporting the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

10. The Co-Chairs have continued to promote the women and peace and security agenda in the framework of the Geneva International Discussions, recognizing the different impacts of conflict on women and men, as well as girls and boys. Throughout the reporting period, the Co-Chairs and co-moderators engaged with and benefited from the perspectives and insights of conflict-affected populations, including displaced women.

11. On 8 October 2025, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution [60/29](#), entitled “Cooperation with Georgia”, in which it requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to present to it an oral update¹ at its sixty-first session on the follow-up to the resolution and a written report at its sixty-second session on developments relating to the resolution and its implementation.

III. Right of return

A. Scope of displacement, return and local integration

12. No major changes were observed during the reporting period with regard to internally displaced persons and refugees exercising their right to return, and no new significant displacements were registered. According to the Internally Displaced Persons, Ecomigrants and Livelihoods Agency of Georgia, as of January 2026 there

¹ The oral update was delivered to the Human Rights Council on 27 March 2026.

were 300,439 individuals registered as internally displaced persons in Georgia. The largest numbers were registered in Tbilisi and Zugdidi/Samegrelo. The generational aspects of displacement in the absence of durable solutions remain a concern. According to government data, the number of registered internally displaced persons increased by 1,267 between the end of 2024 and the end of 2025, primarily as a result of births in their families.

13. It is estimated that more than 45,000 people have previously returned to their homes in the Gali district in Abkhazia. The authorities in control in Abkhazia continue to deny the return of ethnic Georgian internally displaced persons to their areas of origin or habitual residence outside of Gali, Ochamchire and Tkvarcheli districts. The authorities in control in South Ossetia continue to deny the return of ethnic Georgians displaced as a result of the conflict. The United Nations and the Co-Chairs have repeatedly sought assurances from the authorities in control with respect to the rights of returnees to permanent residence, freedom of movement, birth registration and property ownership. The United Nations also continued to call for returnees' access to civic and political rights, equal protection before the law, social security, healthcare, work and employment, education (including mother-tongue-based multilingual education at all levels), freedom of thought, conscience and expression and cultural life. Challenges related to shelter rehabilitation, limited livelihood opportunities, substandard water, sanitation and hygiene conditions and poor health and education facilities have also persisted. Reliable water supply is a long-standing challenge that was exacerbated in September 2025 following a landslide that left residents in Gali and nearby settlements temporarily without access to safe water.

14. The authorities in control in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia have adopted so-called laws that provide for the issuance of documentation to the population, in particular ethnic Georgians, who are thereby defined as "foreign" or "stateless".

15. In December 2016, the authorities in control in Abkhazia amended the so-called "Law on the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens in the Republic of Abkhazia" by introducing a "foreign resident permit" to facilitate the exercise of rights by individuals who do not hold Abkhaz "passports". Since January 2024, pending the issuance of a "foreign resident permit", ethnic Georgians have been provided with a temporary certificate to facilitate their freedom of movement and access to some basic services.

16. The "foreign resident permit" does not grant its holder the full range of political, housing, land and property rights under Abkhazia's de facto legislation. The restrictive eligibility requirements exclude a considerable number of people from obtaining it, including potential future returnees. Moreover, grounds for rejection are broad and open to interpretation. Proper documentation is essential to be able to enjoy freedom of movement. While pedestrian and transport crossings are operational, the lack of valid documents negatively impacts the lives and livelihoods of the affected people, as well as their ability to stay in contact with family. This is particularly the case for older persons and other vulnerable groups, whose physical and mental health could be affected, as well as those with chronic medical conditions. In November 2023, further amendments to the so-called "Law on the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens in the Republic of Abkhazia" streamlined and clarified some of its provisions. The amendments extended the validity period of previously issued residence permits from 5 years to 10 years and expanded the list of documents that can be used to confirm 10 years of permanent residence in Abkhazia.

17. In addition, since 1 January 2019, the holders of Abkhaz "passports" issued before 2016 have been banned from crossing the administrative boundary line, thereby compelling them to apply for the new version of the "passport" or a "foreign resident permit". Following a series of amendments to the so-called "Law on

Citizenship” adopted in 2013 and 2018, the majority of ethnic Georgians in Abkhazia no longer meet the criteria for the acquisition of the new version of the so-called “passports” issued since 2016.

18. The authorities in control in South Ossetia partially eased the restrictions on freedom of movement across the administrative boundary line in August 2022, bringing some relief, especially to ethnic Georgian residents of Akhagori. However, ethnic Georgians displaced in 2008 from other parts of South Ossetia have no opportunity to return. Since the conflict in August 2008, the United Nations has lacked operational access to South Ossetia, apart from a humanitarian assessment mission conducted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in August 2016. It is important that sustained humanitarian access be discussed and agreed upon by both the authorities in control and the Government of Georgia.

19. UNHCR remains ready to resume consultations on the return of displaced persons to Abkhazia and South Ossetia with a view to securing their safe and voluntary return. Moreover, further steps are needed to facilitate their freedom of movement and contact with their home communities, as well as the ability to make a free and informed choice as to whether to return or to integrate in areas of displacement or elsewhere.

20. During the reporting period, the United Nations Population Fund strengthened access for conflict-affected women in Abkhazia to essential sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence services by enhancing provider capacities and fostering professional cooperation across the administrative boundary line. Over 2,500 women were provided with access to free, quality sexual and reproductive health services, including through mobile outreach in remote areas. The health sector response to gender-based violence was institutionalized through the adoption of survivor-centred standard operating procedures. A maternal health referral mechanism contributed to life-saving care for mothers and newborns, while a digital referral hub facilitated cross-boundary consultations. In addition, several protocols were developed in line with standards of the World Health Organization (WHO). International workshops and exchange visits across the administrative boundary line helped strengthen expertise and build professional networks and trust.

21. So-called “borderization” measures along the administrative boundary lines with South Ossetia and Abkhazia continued throughout the reporting period. Further obstacles to freedom of movement, including “state border signs”, watch posts and surveillance equipment, continued to be observed, and continued surveillance and detentions by the Russian Federation border guards were also reported.

22. In South Ossetia, the limited opening of crossing points and ongoing “borderization” measures continued to restrict movement across the administrative boundary line and negatively affect freedom of movement, social and family relations and livelihood opportunities. The lack of access to agricultural fields, orchards, traditional grazing grounds, forests and markets has reduced income and employment opportunities and further limited communication and relations between families living on opposite sides. The fencing measures along the administrative boundary lines have exacerbated the already difficult living conditions of those living on both sides, including many internally displaced persons. To mitigate the negative impact on the livelihoods of the population, the “Interim Governmental Commission Addressing the Needs of Affected Communities in Villages along the Dividing Line” established by the Government of Georgia continued to mobilize State funds for investment in local infrastructure for irrigation and the provision of drinking water, road connections, education, agriculture, shelter, heating and health services.

23. While internally displaced persons retain the right to return, the Government of Georgia continued its efforts to provide such persons with durable housing solutions, access to livelihood opportunities and other assistance, in accordance with the successive action plans for the implementation of the State strategy on internally displaced persons.

24. In 2025, the Government of Georgia provided durable housing solutions to 4,636 internally displaced families, increasing the total number of assisted households to more than 62,000. In January 2026, it was reported that 42,061 families of internally displaced persons had applied for or expressed interest in durable housing solutions. In Tbilisi, 72 collective centres were closed during the reporting period and 775 families residing in those centres were provided with housing. Nevertheless, significant needs persist, particularly among highly vulnerable internally displaced persons residing in collective centres and inadequate private accommodation. The Government plans to close the remaining collective centres in Tbilisi and provide housing solutions in Tbilisi, Rustavi and Borjomi to an additional 5,000 internally displaced households by the end of 2026. Furthermore, 2,300 households will benefit under the “House in the village” programme, which allows the families of internally displaced persons to choose housing in any region of Georgia. In addition, recent legislative changes have introduced adjustments to the housing allocation framework, including revised eligibility criteria and additional benefits, reflecting a gradual shift towards a more needs-based approach, in line with international recommendations. Despite notable progress, the availability of durable housing solutions continues to fall short of fully addressing the scale of existing needs.

25. Other socioeconomic aspects of integration, such as sustainable livelihoods and access to quality educational, medical and social services, should also be addressed. While the United Nations, together with donors and other stakeholders, continues to assist the Government of Georgia in protecting and ensuring the rights of the affected populations, donor funding levels for related humanitarian and development projects in Georgia decreased significantly during the reporting period. Moreover, further progress in integrating and improving the living conditions of the internally displaced has become less a question of humanitarian response and more a matter of integrating their socioeconomic needs into municipal, regional and national development strategies and budgets.

26. The Secretary-General encourages the Government of Georgia to base assistance to internally displaced persons on needs and vulnerabilities, in line with the recommendations adopted by the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons during his visit to Georgia in September 2016. The Secretary-General urges the Government of Georgia to follow up on those recommendations, including on implementing a fully consultative approach to the development of social assistance reforms and allocating sufficient resources to programmes that address the needs of the internally displaced population.

27. Although progress has been made in the reintegration of the ethnic Georgian returnee population in Abkhazia, important needs and protection challenges remain. While those who have spontaneously returned are still considered internally displaced persons by the Government of Georgia and are eligible for financial and other assistance, this should not prevent the authorities in control in Abkhazia from providing them with the proper documentation necessary to enjoy the full spectrum of rights.

28. Key protection concerns expressed by the returnees continue to relate to: (a) freedom of movement; (b) documentation required to enjoy rights and access to services; (c) access to education, including through improved facilities, and, in particular, access to mother-tongue-based multilingual education; (d) access to higher

education; (e) access to quality healthcare on both sides of the administrative boundary line; (f) the urgent need to improve water, sanitary and hygiene facilities to prevent the spread of infectious diseases and viruses; (g) incidents of discrimination, including those related to documentation; and (h) a lack of effective protection against crime and sexual and gender-based violence.

29. The issue of freedom of movement across the administrative boundary line has security, humanitarian and human rights dimensions, and remains of utmost importance to the local population. The authorities in control in Abkhazia should ensure the unhindered provision to all groups of the population of the documentation necessary to facilitate their freedom of movement and access to services. In addition, the reopening of all pedestrian crossing points that were closed in 2016 and 2017 would facilitate travel, particularly for those living further away from the Inguri Bridge.

30. Persons in need should be able to gain access to medical attention as quickly as possible and at the highest possible standard. All stakeholders should exercise maximum care and flexibility in that regard and facilitate conditions for emergency medical crossings, including through the introduction of a fast-track procedure for vulnerable persons. The relevant authorities are also encouraged to ease crossings for family visits, especially in cases of medical or other family emergencies, imminent death or funerals.

B. Institutional framework and operational measures

31. The local population in the Gali district, including returnees, continued to express concern regarding restrictions on freedom of movement, which affect regular contact with family members and friends residing on the other side of the Inguri River, and access to social infrastructure, including medical facilities and markets in Zugdidi. Ensuring freedom of movement remains crucial for improving the living conditions of the local population, advancing the reintegration of returnees and preventing renewed displacement. In that context, it remains essential to identify and implement solutions for the provision of documentation, including to children, in conformity with international law, including international human rights law, and the principles governing the prevention and reduction of statelessness.

32. There is a complex balance between the individual right to voluntary, safe and dignified return and the establishment of the conditions conducive to such return. The individual's right to return, in the case of an internally displaced person, derives from the individual's right to freedom of movement as stipulated in international human rights instruments. Return is both a human right and a humanitarian issue and therefore cannot be directly linked to political questions or the conclusion of peace agreements. It must be addressed irrespective of any solution to the underlying conflict. At the same time, it is primarily for the individual to assess the risks and make an informed choice as to whether to return at a given time. In doing so, displaced persons must be able to consider all factors that could affect their safety, dignity and ability to exercise basic human rights.

33. The United Nations engagement in assisting States in the search for durable solutions for displaced populations is based on the understanding that voluntary return in safety and dignity is one durable solution, the other two being local integration and resettlement. The role of the United Nations in the facilitation, design and implementation of organized return operations is guided by the need to avoid causing harm or contributing to exposure to possible human rights violations: any returns must be voluntary and conducted in safety and dignity. Therefore, activities related to organized returns must be based on a careful risk assessment, considering security

and human rights conditions and concerns, access to livelihoods and basic services and the voluntary nature of return. Unhindered humanitarian access and, consequently, the ability of the United Nations to monitor all those factors effectively, is another important aspect.

34. While humanitarian access to South Ossetia by the international community regrettably remains unavailable, Abkhazia has continued to benefit from the engagement of international actors, and it is hoped that this will continue. The Abkhazia Strategic Partnership, established in 2010 by international partners and chaired by the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Georgia, continues to serve as a coordination platform for United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating in all parts of Abkhazia. Through its collaborative format rooted in humanitarian principles, the Partnership fosters an enabling environment for peace through a holistic approach by providing humanitarian and recovery assistance to the most vulnerable segments of the population, while contributing to confidence-building and peacebuilding and promoting access to rights for conflict-affected communities.

35. UNHCR, in partnership with local and international NGOs and authorities in control in Abkhazia, continued to facilitate protection and assistance services to the most vulnerable families, including through legal advice and counselling concerning access to rights and services. UNHCR provided technical knowledge and skills training as a route to employment for young people and continued supporting self-employed entrepreneurs to expand their activities. In addition to facilitating free-of-charge transportation for schoolchildren and vulnerable persons across the Inguri Bridge, UNHCR also implemented projects to strengthen resilience and community-based protection.

36. UNHCR continued to support self-reliance and economic well-being among vulnerable households with targeted livelihood assistance and vocational training. Agricultural assets were provided to more than 200 individuals, helping ensure food security and generate income. In 2025, UNHCR maintained its support to the most vulnerable families, providing cash assistance to over 500 persons (45% men and 55% women) and distributing food and hygiene packages to some 335 individuals (41% men and 59% women). UNHCR and its partners also sought to strengthen social protection and community-based support, including for elderly and bedridden individuals through home care and other in-kind assistance.

37. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) continued its programmatic assistance to conflict-affected communities living along the administrative boundary lines. These efforts were focused on improving human security and community resilience and creating space for trust-building, including through civil society-driven initiatives with a particular focus on empowering women, young people and excluded groups. UNDP also continued to work to improve living conditions and access to quality social services for conflict-affected communities, including internally displaced persons and vulnerable populations residing along the administrative boundary lines. The UNDP project office in Zugdidi, which was re-established in 2024 with the aim of contributing to addressing the needs of vulnerable populations in the Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region, was closed down in early 2025 due to financing constraints.

38. In 2025, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) supported efforts to provide social and psychological support to more than 1,400 vulnerable children and to improve water, sanitation and hygiene awareness and facilities for children in 16 schools. In the Gali district, UNICEF provided emergency water response for schools, kindergartens and the district hospital by installing water tanks and pumps and drilling a borehole to strengthen and sustain water access. UNICEF and WHO also

strengthened immunization efforts in Abkhazia targeting zero-dose and underimmunized children.

39. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) continued to provide assistance to improve agricultural productivity in Abkhazia and in the Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region. In 2025, 25 farmer field schools were established across both regions to provide training to around 270 women smallholder producers of dairy, and processed fruits and vegetables. FAO has also brought and supported the adaptation of new varieties of citrus and blueberry to Abkhazia. FAO is also working to protect local endemic varieties of grapevine used for winemaking.

40. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) continued to advance the participation, protection and leadership of internally displaced and conflict-affected women from Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Through platforms such as the annual Open Day on Women, Peace and Security, UN-Women facilitated information exchange between women-led organizations and grass-roots constituencies, amplifying the peace and security priorities of women residing along the administrative boundary line. Throughout the reporting period, UN-Women also supported sustained advocacy for the adoption of the fifth national action plan on women and peace and security, while women-led civil society organizations continued to localize and operationalize key elements of the agenda. UN-Women further expanded social mobilization initiatives across 15 municipalities with a large internally displaced and conflict-affected population, engaging 1,843 individuals (1,434 women and 409 men) across Georgia, including through building the capacity of self-help groups and through participatory needs assessments. UN-Women strengthened the network of women and youth peace ambassadors, a national platform comprising more than 250 internally displaced and conflict-affected women and young people. The network functions as a grass-roots mechanism for translating women and peace and security commitments into locally driven action, enhancing members' leadership and collective advocacy to articulate community priorities, engage duty bearers and influence decision-making processes related to human security, participatory governance and inclusive dialogue, while systematically linking community-level peacebuilding efforts with national policy processes. UN-Women also advanced economic resilience efforts through small financial incentives, entrepreneurship support and the institutionalization of an economic empowerment programme for internally displaced women, which is expected to benefit up to 60 such women.

41. WHO continued to support efforts to improve the management of chronic diseases, including through training and the development of health information materials. To ensure early detection and response to outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases, WHO supported the development of standard operating procedures for laboratory surveillance of several types of such diseases. WHO also supported the implementation of minimum requirements of infection prevention and control as a tool to ensure safe and quality care and prevent healthcare-associated infections in healthcare facilities.

IV. Prohibition of forced demographic changes

42. Relevant international law, including international human rights law and international refugee law, should guide managed population movements, including evacuations, and strictly limit forced movements, including those resulting in demographic change. The principles and provisions of international law mentioned in previous reports, as well as non-refoulement obligations governing the protection of refugees and others who flee their homes as a result of, or in order to avoid, the effects

of armed conflict and situations of generalized violence, remain fully applicable. While no new displacement was observed during the reporting period, the demographic consequences of earlier displacement remain.

V. Humanitarian access

A. International law and humanitarian access

43. The need to establish and maintain humanitarian space is essential to effectively meet the humanitarian needs of conflict-affected and displaced populations, to mitigate suffering and to enable United Nations entities to exercise their mandates. All sides must respect their obligations under the relevant rules of international humanitarian law concerning humanitarian access, and act in good faith to fulfil those obligations. The free passage of relief goods and the facilitation of humanitarian operations are correlated with the achievement of the right to life, the right to a decent standard of living and the right to protection against discrimination. According to the United Nations human rights treaty bodies, the obligation of States to respect, protect and fulfil human rights includes an obligation to invite, accept and facilitate international humanitarian assistance, in particular if the State's availability of resources or other obstacles, such as its lack of effective control over parts of the territory, limit its capacity to effectively address all humanitarian needs.

44. Under international humanitarian law, rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need, which is impartial in character and conducted without any adverse distinction, must be allowed and facilitated to the greatest extent possible, and the Secretary-General encourages measures to enable such efforts.

B. Operational challenges

45. The United Nations continues to support all initiatives aimed at enhancing people-to-people contact and improving the day-to-day life of residents on both sides of the "dividing lines". In the spirit of constructive engagement, the Secretary-General encourages all relevant actors to allow for unhindered, sustainable humanitarian access and service delivery by humanitarian partners and permit the conduct of financial and administrative transactions by those partners in the territories not under the control of the Government of Georgia.

46. The United Nations has continued to implement protection and humanitarian assistance activities in Abkhazia. The Abkhazia Strategic Partnership remains an important platform for United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and international NGOs to exchange information and address operational challenges. In response to concerns about declining funding levels, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Georgia has maintained close engagement with international donors to identify new funding opportunities and mitigate the impact of reduced resources.

47. At the same time, the operational environment for implementing needs-based programming by United Nations entities remains challenging. Since October 2019, the authorities in control in Abkhazia have required the stamping of all passports other than those of the Russian Federation, including, in some cases, the passports of staff members of international organizations and NGOs. In addition, they require the nationally recruited staff of United Nations entities and international NGOs in Abkhazia to interact with the "security services" in Abkhazia before crossing the administrative boundary line. While some United Nations personnel have had their travel facilitated, others continue to be questioned by "security services" in Abkhazia

and at the administrative boundary line, thereby limiting the operational flexibility of the United Nations in Abkhazia. The Secretary-General urges all relevant actors to facilitate the activities of the United Nations and other international humanitarian and development actors in line with relevant mandates and accountabilities and ensure operational flexibility for project implementation and unimpeded access for all categories of United Nations personnel and international NGO staff members working to support local populations.

VI. Property rights of refugees and internally displaced persons

48. Property-related issues remain within the scope of Working Group II of the Geneva International Discussions. The Secretary-General's call upon all concerned to adhere to the principles on housing, land and property restitution for refugees and displaced persons (referred to as the "Pinheiro principles") and the underlying norms of international law, including international human rights law, as outlined in the report of 20 May 2013 ([A/67/869](#), paras. 58–60), remains valid. The Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons noted during his visit to Georgia in September 2016 that internally displaced persons were entitled to the restitution of, or compensation for, their lost property, regardless of whether they had chosen to return, integrate into their area of displacement or relocate elsewhere. The Secretary-General encourages continued efforts to address housing, land and property rights in the framework of the Geneva International Discussions.

VII. Timetable for the voluntary return of all refugees and internally displaced persons and work towards durable solutions

49. No agreement or timetable for the voluntary return of all refugees and internally displaced persons has been developed. Working Group II of the Geneva International Discussions could not deal with the issue of voluntary return owing to the continued unwillingness of some participants to discuss the matter. The Secretary-General reiterates that, as long as the conditions for organized return in safety and dignity are not fulfilled and the mechanisms for property restitution are not established, the design of a comprehensive timetable or road map for returns must remain an open matter to be addressed. Those challenges should not prevent all concerned from working to identify durable solutions for all displaced persons, giving particular attention to the implementation of the right of return.

50. In the absence of conditions conducive to organized return and of appropriate implementation mechanisms, the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes will continue to concentrate their efforts on providing the conflict-affected populations, including returnees or persons in the process of returning, with assistance and support for their reintegration. They remain committed to proceeding at the appropriate time, in consultation and cooperation with all concerned, with the development of a timetable or road map addressing all the components outlined in the report of the Secretary-General of 24 August 2009 ([A/63/950](#), para. 20).

VIII. Conclusion

51. The Secretary-General welcomes the regular engagement by the participants in the Geneva International Discussions. It is regrettable that meaningful progress on key security, humanitarian, human rights and development challenges remains

limited, thereby hampering the creation of conditions conducive to the return of displaced populations. The Secretary-General continues to strongly encourage all participants in the Discussions to engage constructively, including on issues of the non-use of force and its practical implementation, as well as those related to freedom of movement, to make tangible progress without delay. This includes the need for all participants to respect and adhere to the previously agreed ground rules for the Discussions, including abandoning the practice of “walkouts” by some participants, in order to help facilitate mutually acceptable solutions on issues related to the voluntary return of internally displaced persons and refugees. It is critical in this period of heightened regional and international tensions for all relevant stakeholders and participants in the Discussions to focus on achieving substantive progress on key security, human rights and humanitarian issues.

52. The Secretary-General remains concerned by the persistent security challenges related to so-called “borderization”, restrictions on freedom of movement and other actions that inhibit the return of internally displaced persons, as well as the ability of humanitarian and development actors to operate freely, especially in South Ossetia. These restrictions place additional burdens on the conflict-affected population, including women and children, depriving them of access to livelihoods and medical and other basic services. The incidents of detention of civilians residing along the Abkhazia and South Ossetia administrative boundary lines for so-called “illegal crossings” are also of concern. All relevant actors should take pragmatic steps to facilitate civilian crossings at convenient and safe locations, work towards lifting the restrictions on movement at crossing points and refrain from any unilateral action that may have an adverse impact on the humanitarian situation of the affected populations and their access to rights and services.

53. The Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms in Ergneti and Gali play a critical role in maintaining stability and security and promoting trust between the participants. It is essential that the Mechanism in Gali resume its functions without preconditions, in accordance with the existing ground rules and principles. While the United Nations Chair of the Mechanism has led efforts to maintain dialogue through regular communication with the participants, those efforts cannot be considered a substitute for the normal functioning of this Mechanism.

54. The engagement in the Geneva International Discussions and the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms is also critical to preserving and expanding humanitarian space and respect for human rights, while refraining from any unilateral actions that may have an adverse impact on the security, humanitarian and socioeconomic situation of affected populations. It is also important that donors ensure continued support for the humanitarian, development, conflict prevention and confidence-building efforts, and for women’s civil society organizations.

55. The Secretary-General calls upon all relevant actors to avoid politicization of humanitarian issues in order to ensure an enabling environment for close cooperation with and support by United Nations entities and effectively address the humanitarian needs of local residents engaging in traditional livelihood activities near and across the administrative boundary lines. Enabling unhindered regular access of humanitarian and development organizations to South Ossetia to assess needs and assist the population, especially the most vulnerable, also remains important.

56. The authorities in control in Abkhazia and South Ossetia are urged to take all measures necessary to facilitate freedom of movement and access to rights and services for the ethnic Georgian population, including returnees. It is also important to develop a long-term vision on the status of the ethnic Georgian returnee population in Abkhazia and South Ossetia that avoids any discriminatory treatment or curtailment of rights. The Secretary-General encourages continued efforts by the

Government of Georgia with regard to providing durable housing solutions, ensuring a consultative approach to the provision of social assistance to the displaced population and implementing other relevant recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons.

57. The Secretary-General reiterates his call upon all relevant stakeholders to engage in a constructive manner and implement the conclusions and recommendations contained in the reports of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to the Human Rights Council.

58. Ultimately, the responsibility for achieving progress in the Geneva International Discussions remains with the participants. The participants and relevant stakeholders should demonstrate the necessary political will, constructive approach and flexibility in the interest of the conflict-affected population and of ensuring lasting peace. The United Nations, including through the United Nations Resident Coordinator, the United Nations country team and the United Nations Co-Chair of the Geneva International Discussions, working in close partnership with other Co-Chairs and partners, remains committed to supporting these efforts.
