

ASRC session on conflicts and crises in the OSCE area: UK statement

Thank you Madam Chairperson and thank you also to distinguished panellists for sharing their insights with us today and we welcome very much the opportunity to discuss these important issues with you.

Sadly, the months since our last conference have illustrated all too clearly the suffering that existing conflicts and crises in our region cause to civilians. It is imperative for all of us to do what we can to alleviate that suffering. The UK strongly supports the OSCE's efforts to resolve existing conflicts and build confidence in the region, in line with OSCE principles and commitments.

The United Kingdom fully supports and welcomes the continued efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs to secure a sustainable, peaceful and fully negotiated settlement of all remaining substantive issues of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. We urge both Armenia and Azerbaijan to make use of this offer, engage in substantive discussions without preconditions and refrain from actions or rhetoric that could further aggravate tensions. We are deeply concerned at recent exchanges of fire at the border and we offer our condolences to those who have lost their loved ones. We also share Ambassador Kasprzyk's conviction that the sides should take advantage of the support offered by the international community. We thank the Ambassador and his dedicated team for the information they provide to the international community and their efforts to support the sides in building confidence.

Madam Chairperson, we support the settlement process negotiations in the 5+2 format as well as meetings in the 1+ 1 format and in the Working Groups. We are grateful to Ambassador Mayr-Harting for all his efforts as well as to the other mediators and observers, and we express our gratitude to the OSCE Mission to Moldova for their constructive work to date. The UK supports a peaceful, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Transnistrian conflict on the basis of recognition of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova, within its internationally recognized borders, and with a special status for Transnistria. We call on the Russian Federation to involve the OSCE in the process of removal and destruction of Russian ammunition from Transnistria in accordance with the 1999 Istanbul Summit Declaration. We also recall the importance of the withdrawal of the Operational Group of Russian Forces, as part of the framework of commitments undertaken in the Summit Declaration.

We thank Ambassador Söder for her work as OSCE Special Representative in the South Caucasus, including as one of the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions. As the only international forum that brings together all sides from the conflict, the GID plays a vital role in trying to achieve a resolution to this ongoing conflict. The Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism meetings also play an important role in preventing the escalation of the conflict and in helping protect the safety and security of people on

the ground. Therefore, it is important that the meetings at Gali resume without further delay or pre-conditions. We call upon the Russian Federation to fulfil immediately its clear obligations under the EU-mediated 12 August 2008 ceasefire agreement to withdraw its forces to pre-conflict positions, as well as its other commitments under the ceasefire agreement. We reiterate our firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders.

For the sake of all those civilians affected by conflict and crisis, it is crucial that the OSCE's response and its conflict resolution processes are as effective as possible. A vital part of achieving that is securing the full, meaningful and equal participation of women at all levels of peace processes. It is also important to ensure that we integrate a gender perspective into all the OSCE's conflict related work, building on the excellent guidance in the OSCE toolkit, 'Inclusion of Women and Effective Peace Processes'. We welcome work undertaken by the OSCE Mission to Moldova and the GID co-chairs in this regard.

The principles and commitments of the OSCE hold the key to rebuilding trust and restoring our collective security. If we can all demonstrate the political will to implement them in full, this will improve the lives of people living throughout the region.

Thank you Madam Chairperson.