

Reiterating our deep concern over the continued illegal Russian presence in Georgia

Thank you Mr President.

Colleagues, thirteen years since the Russian military invasion of Georgia, the UK remains deeply concerned over the continued illegal Russian presence in parts of the country. We fully support Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and underline the need for a peaceful resolution of the conflict based on full respect for the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act and international law.

Georgia has been under continuous hybrid attack from Russia since the 2008 war that saw 20% of Georgian territory effectively annexed. There are thousands of Russian troops and border guards stationed in the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, some as close as 35 minutes from the Georgian capital, Tbilisi. And the human rights situation in these breakaway regions is of serious and growing concern.

We welcome Georgia's ongoing compliance with the EU-mediated 12 August 2008 ceasefire agreement. We call upon the Russian Federation to fulfil immediately its clear obligation under the ceasefire agreement to withdraw its forces to pre-conflict positions, as well as its commitments to allow unfettered access for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and not to impede creation of international security arrangements on the ground.

We also call upon Russia to reverse its recognition of the so-called independence of Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions and end all practices aimed at creeping annexation of these territories into the Russian Federation. We welcome initiatives by the government of Georgia to promote reconciliation among the populations separated by the Administrative Boundary lines and urge Russia not to obstruct these valuable peace building and people to people contacts.

The United Kingdom has been a long standing supporter of this annual resolution in solidarity with the Georgian people and all internally displaced people worldwide. As others have said, this year it is even more pertinent following Russia's illegal and unjustified invasion of Ukraine.

The resolution highlights the inalienable right of the forcefully displaced population to safe and dignified return to their homes, acknowledges their property rights, reaffirms the unacceptability of forced demographic changes, and creates a vital mechanism of reporting by the UN Secretary-General about developments on this issue. These are all matters vital to our universally shared interest in human rights, reconciliation, and peace.

We therefore urge all member states to vote in favour of this resolution that

aims to protect the most vulnerable in society and to underline the unacceptability of using internally displaced persons as political pawns in conflicts.

Thank you colleagues. Thank you, Mr President.