

Russia's 2008 military invasion of Georgia: Joint statement to the OSCE

This statement is delivered on behalf of Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

We reaffirm our full support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

Fourteen years since the Russian Federation's military invasion of Georgia, we remain deeply concerned over the continued occupation of parts of the territory of Georgia and underline the need for the peaceful resolution of the conflict based on full respect for international law and commitments, including the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act.

We condemn Russia's aggression against Georgia in 2008 and express our deep concern over Russia's military exercises and ongoing military presence in Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions. We also reiterate our condemnation of Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine.

We welcome Georgia's compliance with the EU-mediated 12 August 2008 ceasefire agreement. We call upon Russia to fulfill 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 call upon Russia to reverse its recognition of the so-called independence of Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions.

We condemn Russia's steps, which appear intended to unilaterally establish the Georgia-Russia state border on the segments of the occupied territories and incorporate a part of Aibgha village of Georgia into Krasnodar Krai. In the same vein, we express concern over Russia's attempted seizure of 180 hectares of land in Gagra district of Abkhazia, Georgia, which is another step toward attempted annexation. We urge Russia to reverse this process.

We note the January 2021 judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case concerning the armed conflict between the Russian Federation and Georgia in August 2008 and its consequences, including its findings that Russia has exercised effective control over Georgia's regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia following the 12 August 2008 ceasefire agreement, including through its military presence. The Court also ruled that Russia, in violation of the European Convention on Human Rights, tortured Georgian Prisoners of War; arbitrarily detained and killed Georgian civilians, and was responsible for their inhuman and degrading treatment; prevented the return of ethnic Georgians to their homes; and failed to conduct investigations into killings of civilians. We call on Russia to fully comply with the judgment, including

by allowing internally displaced persons (IDPs) to return to their homes in safety and dignity. We also note the decision of International Criminal Court (ICC) of 30 June, 2022 that issued arrest warrant applications for the war crimes committed during Russia's invasion in 2008. We call on Russia to cooperate with the office of prosecutor of the ICC.

We are concerned over the continuous discrimination against Georgians on the grounds of ethnicity in Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions and abuses, including severe restrictions on rights related to freedom of movement, education, residence and property, particularly in connection with the destruction of the houses of IDPs. We call on those in control to enable full and unhindered access by international human rights organisations to the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. We condemn the decision to replace instruction in Georgian language with Russian in schools of the ethnic-Georgian-inhabited Gali district of the Abkhazia region. We also condemn obliteration and alteration of Georgian features from the Georgian cultural heritage monuments in both regions.

We are particularly concerned over the ongoing installation of barbed wire fences and other artificial barriers along the administrative boundary lines (ABLs) of Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions. Isolation and continuous restrictions on freedom of movement have destabilized the situation on the ground and severely impacted the security, safety, well-being, and humanitarian conditions of civilians in conflict-affected areas, particularly in Akhalkalaki district, where reports suggest the local population suffers from shortages of medicine and food, and is denied access to pensions and essentials, including the free healthcare services available in Georgian Government controlled territory. This creates a risk for further depopulation of the Akhalkalaki district.

We remain deeply concerned by ongoing arbitrary detentions around the ABLs and call for the immediate and unconditional release of Irakli Bebuashvili, Kristine Takalandze and all those under arbitrary detention.

We condemn the killing of Georgian citizens Archil Tatumashvili, Giga Otkhoshvili, and Davit Basharuli, and urge Russia to remove any obstacles to bringing the perpetrators to justice. In this context, we reiterate our support for Georgia's preventive steps aimed at eradicating impunity and note the Otkhoshvili-Tatumashvili List adopted by the government of Georgia.

We support the effective continuation of Geneva International Discussions (GID), as of the only format with the Russian Federation to address implementation of EU-mediated 12 August 2008 ceasefire agreement, as well as the security, human rights, and humanitarian challenges stemming from the unresolved Russia – Georgia conflict. We underline the necessity of progress on the core issues of the discussions, including on the non-use of force, establishing international security arrangements in Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions and ensuring the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of IDPs and refugees in accordance with international law. We strongly support applying the Women, Peace and Security agenda in the GID in order to facilitate inclusive and sustainable peace and security on the ground.

We express our support for the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRMs) in Ergneti and Gali and emphasize the important role they can have in preventing the escalation of the conflict and in helping to protect the safety and security of people on the ground. We express our great concern over the lengthy suspension of the Gali IPRM and urge its resumption without further delay or pre-conditions, in line with the ground rules.

We reaffirm our unwavering support for the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM) and call upon Russia to allow the EUMM to implement its mandate in full, including by enabling the EUMM's access on both sides of the ABLs.

We welcome the launch of a multi-stakeholder process for developing a comprehensive "State Strategy for de-occupation and peaceful conflict resolution" by the government of Georgia, as well as the launch of the strategic review of the reconciliation and engagement policy. We support the Georgian government's 'A Step to a Better Future' peace initiative, aimed at improving the humanitarian and socio-economic conditions of people residing in Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions and at fostering confidence building among divided communities. We urge active work on reconciliation and engagement programs and stand ready to support.

We encourage the OSCE's engagement in the process of finding a peaceful resolution to the Russia-Georgia conflict. We regret the closure of the OSCE mission to Georgia in 2009 and encourage the OSCE participating States to decide on the reopening of the OSCE cross-dimensional mission in Georgia, including a monitoring capacity able to operate unhindered across the ABLs. The reopening of the mission would strengthen considerably the OSCE's engagement in the GID and IPRMs. Furthermore, re-establishment of a field mission would support OSCE's work in every phase of the conflict cycle.

The Group of Friends of Georgia will continue to raise awareness of the conflict and of developments on the ground, hold Russia accountable for its obligations and commitments, and advocate for the conflict's peaceful resolution.

International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances 2022: Joint statement to the OSCE

Mr Chair,

I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of Albania, Canada, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Norway, San Marino, Ukraine and my own country, the United Kingdom.

30 August marked the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances. We want to take this opportunity to strongly condemn instances of enforced disappearances and to reaffirm our commitments to the prevention and eradication of this serious human rights violation. We also reiterate our shared commitments in adopting the [2020 Tirana Ministerial Council Decision on the Prevention and Eradication of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#).

Enforced disappearance is used to spread terror, fear and anxiety. Victims of enforced disappearance are often tortured or killed. Those who survive this abhorrent practice, and their loved ones, live in trauma – the physical and psychological scars are often irreparable.

Mr Chair, we condemn enforced disappearance whenever and wherever it occurs. Today, we are making this statement in the devastating context of Russia's heinous and systematic use of this tactic as part of its unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine.

The first and second reports of the Moscow Mechanism on the violations and abuses committed in Ukraine have found credible evidence of abductions and abuse of Ukrainian activists, human rights defenders, volunteers, journalists, health-care workers and government representatives in the areas of Ukraine under control of the Russian army. The [report](#) highlights that Ukrainian civilians in Russian-controlled areas are increasingly being subjected to so-called "filtration", a systematic operation designed to identify and brutally suppress dissent. Those who pass through filtration are often transferred, with their consent or without it, to Russian territory, while those who fail are transferred to the so-called 'People's Republics', where their whereabouts are largely unknown. Some are detained indefinitely in detention centres. Some disappear altogether. We have also heard about the arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances of 21 journalists and civil society activists who vocally opposed the invasion in Kyiv, Kherson, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia regions. We vehemently condemn Russia's use of enforced disappearance and will continue to hold Russia accountable for serious human rights violations and abuses.

Mr Chair,

We stand in full solidarity with victims and survivors of enforced disappearances in Ukraine and around the world, as well as their families and communities affected.

We also strongly defend the importance of ensuring that credible reports of enforced disappearance lead to independent and transparent investigations and prosecute those responsible, in order to provide justice to victims and their families.

In closing, we jointly reaffirm our commitment to address this egregious practice and to step up our efforts to end enforced disappearance in the OSCE region.

[New General Aviation Advocate appointed](#)

News story

Mike Pearson announced as General Aviation Advocate.



The Department for Transport has today (Friday 2 September 2022) appointed a new General Aviation Advocate to represent the needs and ambitions of the general aviation (GA) sector.

Mike Pearson, a seasoned GA professional, has been recruited by the department as the new GA Advocate to support the GA industry and provide advice to ministers. The GA Advocate role was created in 2017 and serves to represent and raise the profile of GA. Mike will build on the important work of the [previous GA Advocate, Phil Dunnington](#), who very sadly passed away in 2021, and on the work of the former GA Champion role created in 2015.

New GA Advocate, Mike Pearson, is a member of the Royal Aero Club, an airfield manager for Popham airfield and served as a Chair of the Airfield Operators Group (AOG). He also served as a Chairman of the Blackbushe Airport Consultative Committee and as the Director of Enterprise for Southwark College.

Aviation Minister, Robert Courts, said:

It's vital we make sure the industry is well-represented to solve some of the most pressing issues they are currently facing and enhance further the UK's position as a world leader in aviation.

Mike is a longstanding role model in aviation and an ideal advocate for the general aviation sector. His career shows not only his excellent suitability for the role, but also how exciting the sector is, and I take great pleasure in welcoming him.

The appointment is key to the delivery of the [GA roadmap](#) (published April 2021) that aims to make the UK the best place in the world for GA. The appointment is also an important step in delivering the commitments on general aviation in [Flightpath to the future](#) (published earlier this year).

Published 2 September 2022

[Reappointment of 3 lay panel members of the Judicial Conduct and Investigations Office](#)

News story

The Lord Chancellor has announced the reappointment of 3 lay panel members of the Judicial Conduct and Investigations Office for a third term of 9 months.



The Lord Chancellor, in consultation with the Lord Chief Justice, has announced the reappointment of 3 lay panel members of the Judicial Conduct and Investigations Office. The members are:

Paul Curtis; Jenni-Douglas Todd; Judith Webb MBE;

The reappointments will run from 1 July 2022 to 31 March 2023.

The Judicial Conduct and Investigations Office is an independent office which supports the Lord Chancellor and Lord Chief Justice in considering complaints about the personal conduct of judicial office-holders.

Appointments and reappointments are made by the Lord Chancellor and are regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. The reappointments have been made in line with the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

Biographies

Paul Curtis is Tribunal Chair of the Medical Practitioner Tribunal Service. He is a panel Lay Member at the General Optical Council. He is also Lay Chair at the School Admission Appeals Panel and Lay Chair Independent Review Panel (School Exclusions) at the East Sussex County Council

Jenni Douglas-Todd is a Director of Equality and Inclusion at NHS England, Southampton. She is currently Deputy Chairman and Senior Independent Director with University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust. Jenni is a former chief executive of Hampshire Police Authority and the Office of the Hampshire Police and Crime Commissioner. She is Independent Chairman of the Dorset Integrated Care System. Jenni is a member of the English Cricket Board's Regulatory Committee; Non-Executive Director with Hampshire Cricket Board and a Trustee with the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders.

Ms Judith Webb MBE is a board member of the Cairngorms National Park Authority and a member of the Independent Agricultural Appeals Panel. Her previous appointments include: Chair of Defra's Rural Development Service during its transition into Natural England; Deputy Chair of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee; and Commissioner for Forestry Commission in Wales.

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[UK legalises public documents electronically: 2 September 2022](#)

The UK Legalisation Office (part of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office) will now be able to receive documents digitally and will issue electronic 'e-Apostille' certificates enabling a quicker, cheaper and more efficient service for thousands of people around the globe.

A [legalised document](#) is needed in many international transactions including overseas working visas and managing property. Currently customers send their physical documents to the UK Legalisation Office by post or courier and receive the documents back several days later with a paper certificate, known as an Apostille, attached.

The first UK e-Apostille was issued on 15 December 2021 as part of a pilot initiative. The option to apply for an e-Apostille will now be opened up to more customers.

Secure digital process

Applicants will be able to quickly upload digital documents instead of posting them. Documents must be signed using either an Advanced Electronic Signature, or a Qualified Electronic Signature, which offer high levels of validation.

The Apostille is issued as an attachment to a PDF, with the document/s the certificate relates to also attached. Both the overarching PDF and the Apostille attachment are digitally signed by the Legalisation Office to ensure integrity. The electronic signature/s of the public official/s within the customer's document/s are also preserved.

Customers will still have the option of a paper Apostille, and a small number of documents (such as police record documents) will continue to require a paper-based Apostille for specific security reasons.

Chris Ward, Head of Public-facing Services, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, said:

This is an exciting development which will provide a much more efficient user experience.

A digital Apostille solution has been many years in the making, but this new system is capable of providing a fully digital service.

We want to continue to provide the best possible service to our customers and will develop the system further to meet a range of user needs.

Michael Lightowler, Notary Public and Member of the Notaries Society of England and Wales said:

The process is straightforward and efficient.

Obvious benefits are speed of turnaround and lack of need to use paper and post or couriers, all of which also reduces costs.

Record keeping is simpler, with my digital files saved directly to a folder once the e-Apostille is added, instead of a time consuming document scanning step.

The e-Apostille service offers benefits to international trade and commerce in terms of security and convenience. It will also help to reduce the environmental impact of circulating hard copy public documents around the world.

International acceptance

UK e-Apostilles have been accepted by authorities in Italy, the Netherlands, Panama and the Philippines.

Under an international agreement over 100 countries that are signed up to the [Apostille Convention](#) should equally accept e-Apostilles. Users are advised to check the requirements of the organisation or individual that has requested the Apostille before they apply.

Overseas authorities can view an e-Apostille using a PDF reader. They can check all UK Apostilles, including the new e-Apostilles, by entering a reference [online](#).