



Information Documents

SG/Inf(2018)34

8 November 2018¹

Consolidated report on the conflict in Georgia (April – September 2018)

Document presented by the Secretary General

¹ This document has been classified restricted until examination by the Committee of Ministers.

Introduction

1. At their 1080th meeting on 24 and 26 March 2010, the Ministers' Deputies took the following decision: "*The Deputies, restating the previous decisions of the Committee of Ministers, invited the Secretary General to prepare his consolidated report on the conflict in Georgia based on his outline and taking into account the comments made during the present meeting*".

2. It is recalled that the objective of the report is to take stock of the situation in Georgia following the August 2008 conflict, to report on the related activities of the Council of Europe and to propose further Council of Europe action. The report is composed of four parts:

- update on major developments in the period under review;
- assessment of statutory obligations and commitments related to the conflict and its consequences;
- the human rights situation in the areas affected by the conflict; and
- current Council of Europe activities aimed at addressing the consequences of the conflict, their follow-up, as well as proposals for future action.

3. This 18th consolidated report covers the period between April and September 2018. It builds on the previous consolidated reports², as well as Secretariat reports on the human rights situation in the areas affected by the conflict in Georgia³ along with the report on the Council of Europe activities in the areas affected by the conflict⁴ and its updates⁵. The Deputies' decisions on the Council of Europe and the conflict in Georgia are also recalled in this respect.⁶

4. A delegation of the Secretariat carried out a fact-finding visit to Tbilisi on 17-18 September 2018 and had the opportunity to discuss the situation with the Georgian authorities, the Public Defender of Georgia, as well as representatives of international organisations and local NGOs working on conflict resolution and reconciliation. The Secretariat wishes to express its gratitude to the Georgian authorities for their support in organising the visit and to all interlocutors for their assistance and valuable contributions.

² [SG/Inf\(2010\)8](#), [SG/Inf\(2010\)19-final](#), [SG/Inf\(2011\)8](#), [SG/Inf\(2011\)24](#), [SG/Inf\(2012\)5](#) and [SG/Inf\(2012\)28-rev](#), [SG/Inf\(2013\)13](#), [SG/Inf\(2013\)38](#), [SG/Inf\(2014\)17](#), [SG/Inf\(2014\)41](#), [SG/Inf\(2015\)18](#), [SG/Inf\(2015\)41](#), [SG/Inf\(2016\)14-rev](#), [SG/Inf\(2016\)37](#), [SG/Inf\(2017\)38](#)

³ [SG/Inf\(2009\)7](#), [SG/Inf\(2009\)9](#) and [SG/Inf\(2009\)15-final](#)

⁴ [SG/Inf\(2009\)5](#)

⁵ [SG/Inf\(2009\)5](#) Addendum and [SG/Inf\(2009\)5](#) Addendum 2

⁶ Cf. decisions adopted by the Deputies at their 1227th meeting on 12 May 2015, 1255th meeting on 4 May 2016, 1285th meeting on 3 May 2017 and 1315th meeting, on 2 May 2018 as well as the decisions of the 128th Ministerial Session, 18 May 2018

5. Despite repeated efforts, the Secretariat was not given the authorisation to visit Abkhazia and South Ossetia for the purpose of this consolidated report. The Secretariat consequently had no opportunity to assess the human rights situation on the ground. The Secretary General intends to pursue his efforts in view of fact-finding visits to Abkhazia and South Ossetia for the preparation of future consolidated reports. At the same time, it should be noted that in the period under review the Council of Europe (Secretariat members and experts) has continued enjoying access to Sukhumi for the purpose of the implementation of Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) (cf. part IV.3).

6. This report does not replace the monitoring procedures established in the Council of Europe. Nor should it be seen as prejudging any possible decisions in the cases related to the conflict and its consequences, which are currently pending before the European Court of Human Rights.

7. Nothing in this report should be interpreted as being contrary to the full respect of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders.⁷

8. This report does not prejudge or infringe upon a possible future political settlement of the conflict within the framework of the Geneva International Discussions (GID), nor the implementation of the six-point agreement of 12 August 2008 and the implementing measures of 8 September 2008.

I Update on major developments in the period under review

9. The 10th anniversary of the conflict was commemorated with various activities and political reactions at different levels on 7-8 August. A number of states and international organisations reiterated their support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders, recalled the plight of the conflict-affected population and called for increased commitment by relevant actors to advance the reconciliation and peace process.

⁷ It is a fundamental objective of the member states of the Council of Europe to uphold the territorial integrity of Georgia. However, the Russian Federation recognised South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states on 26 August 2008.

10. The 44th round of the Geneva International Discussions (GID) was held on 20 June. According to the Co-Chairs, the security situation on the ground was assessed by the participants as relatively calm and stable. As stated by the Co-Chairs, in view of the diverging positions expressed by the participants on a draft joint statement on the non-use of force, the Co-Chairs proposed to continue working further on that matter.⁸ The Georgian central government's position remains that any such statement must lead to the full implementation of the 12 August 2008 agreement and international security arrangements on the ground. Humanitarian issues relating to missing persons, freedom of movement, health care, documentation, education, livelihoods and environmental concerns have remained pertinent in the agenda of the GID Working Group II. Long-standing divergent approaches to the issue of IDPs/refugees however persist, making it impossible to complete the discussions.⁹

11. It is also reported that the climate of the discussions has been increasingly affected by the ramifications of cases of the tragic deaths and killings of Georgian citizens in conflict-affected areas. While the need to conduct a proper investigation into these cases has been repeated by the GID Co-Chairs in order to avoid any perception of impunity, regrettably no effective steps towards serving justice appear to have been pursued. On 27 June, pursuant to a parliamentary resolution, the Government of Georgia approved a decree that establishes a list of 33 individuals convicted or charged with grave crimes committed against ethnic Georgians in Abkhazia and South Ossetia (the "Tatunashvili-Otkhozoria" list). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice and the National Bank of Georgia were instructed to work with foreign institutions with a view to imposing on designated individuals travel, financial and property restrictions. The *de facto* authorities have publicly objected to such steps and refused to discuss the above-mentioned cases at the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRMs). Against this background, the recent meetings of the IPRMs in both Gali and Ergneti have been disrupted and are facing uncertainty. The Co-Chairs have called on the participants to respect the founding principles of IPRMs and resume regular meetings without further delay.

12. The 45th round of the GID was held on 10 October, marking also the 10th anniversary of their launch. While acknowledging the participants' continued commitment to this unique mechanism, the Co-Chairs noted that the core issues on the GID agenda remain to be resolved. They called on the participants to adopt a forward-looking and more constructive approach, which would allow the GID to fulfil its mandate. They underlined that the primary responsibility for making effective use of this format lies with the participants.¹⁰

⁸ Press Communiqué of the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions, Geneva, Switzerland 20 June 2018

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ 45th round of the Geneva International Discussions, Geneva, 11 October 2018

13. On 4 April, the Government of Georgia approved the “*Step to a Better Future*” peace initiative consisting of a set of proposals to facilitate trade, education and mobility to the benefit of conflict-affected communities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia through a special, status-neutral approach. In June, the initiative was endorsed by the Parliament of Georgia. The State Minister for Reconciliation (SMR) who co-ordinates the implementation emphasised to the delegation that at this point the government was concentrated on mustering political and financial support at international level.

14. The Georgian Prime Minister’s Special Representative for Relations with Russia Abashidze and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Karasin continued their informal dialogue aimed at improving bilateral relations between the two countries. Two rounds of dialogue were held during the period under review, on 24 May and 1 October, in Prague, with both sides acknowledging that the process was mutually beneficial, resulting in increased levels in trade, tourism and other fields. It was reported that, following Georgia, on 18 May, Russia also signed a contract with the Swiss company SGS on the monitoring of cargo goods passing through the border with Georgia, as part of the 2011 accords on Russia’s accession to the WTO. Both Russia and Georgia have reiterated that they intend now to move forward with the practical implementation of the agreement. In other signs of growing exchanges, the possibility of opening a Russian visa-issuing centre in Tbilisi, as well as increasing the frequency of flights between the two countries has reportedly been discussed more recently.

15. Throughout the reporting period, the political situation in Abkhazia remained volatile. Against a background of reported rise in crime and economic difficulties, the opposition parties have called on *de facto* President Khajimba to refrain from seeking “re-elections” in 2019 and have announced mass rallies in the coming months.

16. It was reported that, on 29 May 2018, the Syrian Arab Republic had established diplomatic relations with both Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This step prompted condemnation by a number of countries and international players. In response to recognitions, Georgia severed diplomatic ties with Syria.

II Assessment of statutory obligations and commitments related to the conflict and its consequences

17. Below is an update on statutory obligations and specific commitments – as listed in PACE Opinions 193 (1996) and 209 (1999) – which have been selected for the purpose of reporting on the conflict in Georgia and its consequences. This part builds on Part 1 of the first and second consolidated reports on the conflict in Georgia ([SG/Inf\(2010\)8](#) and [SG/Inf\(2010\)19-final](#)).

- i. *To accept the principles of the rule of law and of the enjoyment by all persons within its jurisdiction of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to collaborate sincerely and effectively in the realisation of the aim of the Council of Europe.*
- ii. *To settle international as well as internal disputes by peaceful means (an obligation incumbent upon all member states of the Council of Europe), rejecting resolutely any forms of threats of force against its neighbours.*

18. On 23 May 2018, the European Court of Human Rights held a Grand Chamber hearing on the merits in the inter-State case of *Georgia v. Russia* concerning the armed conflict in August 2008 and its aftermath. The Court has announced that a judgment would be delivered in the months following the hearing. In this regard, the Court's decision on interim measures under Rule 39 of the Rules of the Court calling upon the Parties concerned to comply with their engagements under the Convention, particularly in respect of Articles 2 and 3, is still in force. Individual cases in relation to the 2008 conflict remain pending.

19. During the period under review, the Government of Georgia lodged a new inter-State application against the Russian Federation pertaining to violations of rights of ethnic Georgians attempting to cross, or living next to, the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The Georgian Government has invoked Russia's responsibility in particular in connection with recent cases of detentions and loss of lives of IDPs and residents living in areas adjacent to and/or attempting to cross the ABL.

20. The investigation authorised by the International Criminal Court (ICC) into alleged crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in the context of armed conflict between 1 July and 10 October 2008 continued and the presiding judge of the chamber was elected.

iii. *To respect strictly the provisions of international humanitarian law, including in cases of armed conflict on its territory.*

21. As of August 2018, a total of 2,405 cases of missing persons in relation to the armed conflicts remained open. Sustained engagement in the framework of the two Co-ordination Mechanisms facilitated by the International Red Cross (ICRC), as a neutral intermediary, reportedly resulted in further progress. In April 2018, the remains of another 22 people who went missing in connection with the 1992–93 armed conflict in Abkhazia were identified and handed over to families. In line with its five-year strategy on the missing, the ICRC offered support and expertise with a view to progressively building local ownership and capacities. The need to develop suitable legal frameworks and systems to provide effective support to the families has also been noted.

22. The ICRC also continued to focus on protection of detainees (visits to detention places), restoration of family links (reunifications/documentation). It also facilitated unhampered medical transfers of patients from and around Tskhinvali across the ABL; 116 such cases were reported during the period under review. Moreover, in the context of ICRC work on promotion of international humanitarian law, a Working Group was set up within the International Humanitarian Law Commission to deal with integration of possible amendments in the criminal legislation of Georgia.

iv. *To co-operate in good faith with international humanitarian organisations and to enable them to carry out their activities on its territory in conformity with their mandates.*

v. *To facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to the most vulnerable groups of the population affected by the consequences of the conflict.*

23. The Georgian central government remains generally supportive to actions and steps that are beneficial to direct contacts with the populations in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. As mentioned above, the government's "Step to a Better Future" initiative also sets out concrete proposals in this regard (see also part I). Notwithstanding these efforts, no progress was recorded on changes to the "Georgia's Law on Occupied Territories" which remains in force. While it has been noted that the law can be applied in a flexible manner, concerns remain that its ambiguity complicates the environment for international engagement, including humanitarian activities, as well as direct contacts. In meetings with the delegation, international interlocutors reiterated in particular the need to address constraints on administrative and financial procedures in relation to the delivery of assistance in Abkhazia.

24. During the reporting period, UN agencies, funds and programmes (UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF and FAO) but also other international non-governmental organisations (such as the Danish Refugee Council, *Action Contre La Faim* and World Vision) operated in Abkhazia under the "Abkhaz strategic partnership framework" co-ordinated by the UNDP which has continued to operate a sub-office in Sukhumi. The European Union (EU) also supported and funded activities in Abkhazia in line with its engagement and non-recognition policy. The Liaison Mechanism established under the UNDP, with the support of the EU, continued to function facilitating *inter alia* the delivery of various forms of humanitarian and medical aid. The mechanism's value deriving from its status-neutral nature and its acceptance by all parties continues to be acknowledged.

25. In addition to protection and humanitarian support, it is noted that international engagement has gradually expanded to tackle recovery and development needs, in a multitude of fields including health, agriculture and livelihoods, education, environment and support for civil society. It was reported to the delegation that international personnel of international humanitarian organisations continued to enjoy sustained and stable access to Abkhazia. At the same time, according to some interlocutors, participation of *de facto* officials in international events had become more difficult, and while an increasing number of NGOs seem to be willing to engage in international initiatives, the environment remains stringent.

26. With very few exceptions, international humanitarian organisations were unable to gain operational access to South Ossetia. No progress in terms of meaningful engagement has been reported since the last report.

III Human rights situation in the areas affected by the conflict

27. Regrettably, no progress has been made in ensuring continued and unfettered access for international human rights mechanisms, including those of the Council of Europe (CoE), to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, although, it was reported that the OSCE Commissioner for National Minorities (OSCE HCNM) paid a visit to Abkhazia in September 2018. All interlocutors met by the delegation underlined that regular and standard-based assessments of the application of international human rights treaties, including the ECHR, remain an urgent priority.

28. The information presented in Chapters *III.1 – III.2* is based on the delegation's discussions with the Georgian authorities, civil society representatives, international organisations as well as information from open sources in Tbilisi, Sukhumi and Tskhinvali.

III.1 Reports on Abkhazia

III.1.i Security

29. As mentioned above (cf. paragraph 10), the overall security situation on the ground was reported to be assessed as relatively stable and calm, however, in meetings with the delegation, the Georgian officials described the security environment as fragile. The hitherto regular meetings of the IPRM in Gali play an essential role in preventing tensions. The hotline also continued to be used in an effective manner, notably as regards medical evacuation through the ABL, with 1,600 activations reported since January 2018.

30. Despite the fact that all participants continued to declare their commitment to the IPRM format, at the time of the delegation's visit, the mechanism had not convened for several months, following a short IPRM on 27 June. Interlocutors in charge of security and monitoring of the situation met by the delegation noted that this situation resulted from diverging positions of the participants on the agenda point relating to the 2016 murder of a Georgian citizen in the village of Khurcha near the ABL. Notwithstanding extensive exchanges during previous IPRMs, regrettably no progress has been achieved in bringing the perpetrators to justice.

31. All interlocutors underlined the need for the IPRM to resume in due time. Concerns were voiced that any recess in relation to the only platform on the ground where participants are able to discuss incidents, would inevitably increase the unpredictability of the security environment.

III.1.ii Freedom of movement

32. According to the relevant actors involved in security issues, the reporting period was marked by a reduced pace of so-called "borderisation" measures. It was however pointed out that this appears to be related to the fact that "borderisation" installations have now been placed in most of the ABL segments where there are no natural barriers. The enforcement of the new crossing regime has made the ABL less permeable resulting in fewer "unauthorised" crossings.

In meetings with the delegation, various interlocutors, including from civil society, expressed concerns that “borderisation” significantly interferes with the movement of the local population and has pushed further away communities on the two sides of the conflict divide. Restrictions on freedom of movement, in turn, also negatively affect people’s access to livelihood, adequate medical treatment, education and other basic services.

33. Following the 2017 closure of the two crossing points into/from Abkhazia in Nabakhevi and Otobaia, approximately 3,000 people cross on a daily basis through the main bridge over the Inguri River, which remains the central crossing point. Despite rehabilitated infrastructure and increased transport options on the Abkhaz side of the ABL, it is reported that not everyone is able to use this crossing point. It is understood that generally less people cross the ABL although this could also be in part due to reduced economic activity following a widespread pest contamination of agriculture which continued during the period under review. Conversely, it is also understood that the aggravation of the socio-economic situation is linked also with the closure of the above mentioned crossing points.

34. Fewer detentions are reported even if the numbers are inconclusive due to non-utilisation of the hotline. The Georgian authorities informed the delegation that 11 persons were detained during the period under review. At the same time, the delegation’s interlocutors expressed concerns that detention cases were not dealt with as rapidly as in the past but took time to be processed. Apprehended persons often reportedly ended up in Abkhaz custody facilities, such as the one in Dranda.

35. According to observers, the main reason for “unauthorised” crossings is the absence of crossing “documents”, which is an expression of the general documentation problem faced by the ethnic Georgian population in the Gali district (see part III.1.iii). Recently, the *de facto* authorities have reportedly agreed to extend old crossing documents, notably the so-called *Form no. 9*, until the end of 2018 enabling their holders to cross the ABL, access services and livelihoods. At the same time, the old internal Soviet passports used by many have been reportedly removed from use.

36. Humanitarian actors on the ground continued to call for a more flexible approach when enforcing crossing rules in respect of vulnerable persons, including schoolchildren and those requiring urgent medical evacuation to territory controlled by the Georgian central government. The delegation was however informed that the *de facto* authorities had suspended a UNHCR-supported shuttle service facilitating the transportation of vulnerable people to the Inguri bridge.

III.1.iii Identity documents

37. The ethnic Georgian population in Abkhazia continued to face a complex and uncertain situation regarding their basic documentation. The delegation was informed that almost 9,000 out of over 20,000 persons who had their *de facto* “passports” removed or invalidated in 2013 had applied for the new so-called “foreign residence permits” and over 4,000 such *de facto* “documents” had been issued. The designation as “foreign” however seems to represent a major impediment for many to apply and enhances the sense of isolation of the local population.

38. Despite amendments to the so-called Abkhaz “Law on the legal status of foreigners”, concerns over the ambiguity of legal status, limitation of basic rights as well as the restrictive eligibility requirements for the new *de facto* “documents” have not been alleviated. A solution that would ultimately provide for addressing fully these matters in conformity with international principles seems elusive at this point.

III.1.iv Access to education, including teaching of/in the native language

39. Access to education in native language remains a divisive issue in Abkhazia. While the Abkhaz language is considered to have remained for years in a vulnerable position due to lack of material support, the gradual prohibition of teaching of/in the Georgian language continued to give rise to serious concerns and affect the quality of education. Since the start of the new school year and pursuant to rules introduced in 2015, instruction in Russian instead of the Georgian language is now offered from grades one to seven, in all eleven schools in the Lower Gali. In grades 8-11 the language of instruction remains Georgian, however the declared aim of the *de facto* authorities is to replace Georgian by Russian as the language of instruction in all grades by 2022. The teaching of the Georgian language and literature has been reduced to two to three classes per week. The language policy is reportedly enforced through inspections and the delegation was informed about instances of pressure and sanctions for non-compliance, including substitutions of principals in schools and kindergartens.

40. The situation remains unchanged in other areas inhabited by the ethnic Georgian population. According to the Georgian authorities in schools in Ochamchire and Tkvarcheli, instruction is offered exclusively in the Russian language whereas in Upper Gali schools, Georgian is taught as a foreign language and literature for two hours per week.

41. In meetings with the delegation, the representatives of the Georgian central government underlined the urgency of the situation, which they consider to be highly discriminatory. They conveyed readiness to support initiatives of mother-tongue based multilingual education benefiting the different ethno-linguistic groups and to supply the relevant textbooks, including in the Abkhaz language. It is also noted that within the “Step to a Better Future” initiative, the Government of Georgia has elaborated a special approach offering specific conditions and programmes aimed at enhancing access to quality education to young people from Abkhazia (and South Ossetia) at all stages of education both within Georgia and abroad.

III.2 Reports on South Ossetia

42. The general security situation along the ABL during the reporting period was assessed by international monitors as relatively stable. Local security initiatives, such as flights of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and other activities by security actors, continued to be dealt with within the IPRM in Ergneti, co-facilitated by the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM), the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the hotline. While the IPRM continued to convene with regular frequency throughout the period under review, it was reported that the most recent 89th meeting on 14 September was disrupted owing to disagreements over the agenda point relating to the investigation of deaths of two Georgian citizens, including that of Mr Archil Tatumashvili in custody in South Ossetia, in February 2018. (see also part I). The co-facilitators have encouraged all participants to demonstrate a pragmatic approach, even on challenging issues. No indications have been provided with regard to the IPRM’s possible resumption date.

43. In the run-up to these events, the Georgian authorities identified two “security officers” from South Ossetia and charged them *in absentia* for illegal confinement and assistance in torture in relation to the Tatumashvili case. On 13 September, Interpol issued red notices for both of them based on a request from the Ministry of Justice of Georgia. The *de facto* authorities of South Ossetia protested this step. More generally, the Georgian central government has underlined its commitment to pursue justice in this case through all available means.

44. The period under review was regrettably marked by further activities of so-called “borderisation”, which interfered with freedom of movement, the socio-economic situation and security perceptions of the population residing on both sides of the ABL. Moreover, it was reported to the delegation that security actors are engaged in more assertive patrolling on the ABL and its vicinity.

45. The so-called “borderisation” effects are felt in particular as regards agricultural livelihoods. The delegation was informed of cases where access to farming lands has been effectively cut off in a number of villages along the ABL. A drastic reduction in seasonal movement of livestock across the ABL has also been reported.

46. International observers estimate that some 450 crossings per day take place along the ABL, mainly through the Odzisi/Mosabruni central crossing point to Akhagori, populated mainly by the ethnic Georgian population who commute to and from territory controlled by the central government of Georgia. Crossings relating to medical evacuations and release of detainees continued to take place through the village of Ergneti.

47. The local *de facto* authorities have reportedly continued to issue temporary permissions (so-called *propusks*) whose validity varies from several months to one year. While this temporary solution generally allows for freedom of movement and hence access to livelihoods, access to documentation overall has remained problematic pending the ongoing controversial debate over the status of the ethnic Georgian population in Akhagori. In this respect, the delegation was informed of new rules approved by the *de facto* authorities stipulating that all *de facto* state employees, including in Akhagori, must be “citizens” of South Ossetia.

48. “Unauthorised” crossings continue to be treated by the *de facto* authorities as violations of the so-called “border regime” leading to detention and administrative punishment of those concerned. According to the Georgian authorities, 64 persons were detained since March. While the majority of those detained are subsequently released owing *inter alia* to effective exchange of information through the hotline, cases of longer detention periods continued to occur. For instance on 9 October, the *de facto* authorities released a Georgian woman who had spent 10 days in detention after she was sentenced for alleged “illegal” crossing and allegedly aiding others to do so in return for payment.

49. As regards access to education in the native language, it is reported that the gradual transition to the Russian language continued in the six Georgian schools in Akhagori during the period under review. On 5 September, a Russian-language school building was inaugurated in a step that was condemned by the Georgian authorities.

III.3 The situation of Internally Displaced Persons

50. During the period under review, regrettably no progress could be reported as regards the voluntary, safe, dignified and unhindered return of IDPs and refugees on the basis of internationally recognised principles. Additionally, no appropriate agreement and timetable on return has been developed due to prevailing divergences among the parties. On 12 June, the UN General Assembly adopted with 81 votes in favour a Georgia-tabled resolution *inter alia* calling upon the participants of the GID to create favourable security conditions to ensure voluntary return that is consistent with international principles. However, some GID participants continued to criticise these annually adopted resolutions and in response refused to engage in the relevant discussions in the GID format (see also part I).

51. As of September 2018, the number of IDPs residing in Georgia equalled 280,055. In the absence of conditions conducive to return, the Georgian Government continued to focus on local integration of IDPs in line with its Strategy and Action Plan 2017-18, implemented in co-operation with international stakeholders.

52. As regards durable housing solutions (DHS), multiple accommodation programmes are underway, including construction and purchasing of new apartment blocks and rural houses, reconstruction/rehabilitation and privatisation of existing accommodation, as well as various types of financial assistance to pay mortgages and rents. Notwithstanding progress made, the needs for DHS remain consequential: out of 89,322 IDP families, only 38,670 have benefited thus far and the cost to address the remaining needs has been estimated at around US\$800 million.¹¹ It continues to be noted that the situation of IDPs who reside in destitute collective centres as well as those living in private accommodation also deserves urgent attention.

53. In addition to DHS, the socio-economic integration of IDPs remains a significant challenge. Small-scale income-generating opportunities for vulnerable IDP households are made available through the IDP Livelihood Agency, funded by the Georgian state budget. Considering the scale of needs and reduced availability of humanitarian funding, international humanitarian actors have continued to emphasise that IDPs' socio-economic rights can be more effectively addressed in the framework of the national and regional development initiatives rather than on solely humanitarian grounds. In this context, the government's decision to reform state assistance to IDPs by decoupling it from the IDP status and mainstreaming it within the general social welfare score-based system has been welcomed. The delegation was informed that it was planned that the relevant draft amendments to the Law on IDPs be considered next year.

54. During the period under review, the Government implemented a reform of central institutions, which envisages *inter alia* the abolition of the Ministry in charge of IDPs (MRA). The functions of the Ministry are now split between different organs: as of July 2018, IDP issues form part of the mandate of the new Ministry of IDPs from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health, and Social Affairs while construction works in the framework of the durable housing programme will be undertaken by the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure.

¹¹ Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia. Report of the Secretary General of the UN, 30 April 2018

IV Activities of Council of Europe organs and institutions and their follow-up

IV.1 Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

55. On 17 and 18 September 2018 the Monitoring Committee of the PACE met in Tbilisi. Committee members also visited the ABL at the village of Didi Khurvaleti. On 25 April 2018, the Parliamentary Assembly adopted [Resolution 2214 \(2018\)](#) on “*Humanitarian needs and rights of internally displaced persons in Europe*”. The Assembly noted the immense efforts to address the situation of IDPs in Georgia, expressed regret that the conflict remains unresolved and called for a number of steps in that regard.

IV.2 Operational activities

Youth

56. Fifteen young people from Tbilisi, Sukhumi and Tskhinvali, including a facilitator from each community, took part in the Youth Peace Camp (YPC) 2018 organised in the European Youth Centre in Budapest (Hungary) from 26 June to 3 July 2018. These participants developed several proposals for further engagement on conflict transformation, including on promotion of human rights and human rights education for young people and children in Abkhazia through workshops, the press and social media; a summer camp for young people on the topic of peace and awareness raising of human rights in South Ossetia; a project promoting peace building and cross-border communication as well as educational programmes on human rights and peace education for IDP children in Georgia. Possible CoE support to these initiatives will be discussed at a later stage. After 2018, the YPC is expected to convene on a biennial basis in order to offer more space for structured and proper follow-up.

IV.3 Operational activities on Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) and their follow-up

(a) Activities organised during the reporting period

57. The CoE has continued the implementation of CBMs under a politically neutral and impartial frame, intended to build dialogue and trust between all parties involved, and to support the protection of human rights of the people living in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, within the CoE Action Plan for Georgia 2016-19. Activities are identified jointly with relevant actors and are closely co-ordinated with the Permanent Representation of Georgia to the Council of Europe, the Office of the Georgian State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, the UNDP Liaison Mechanism as well as international actors.

CBMs with Abkhazia

58. Within the second phase of the project on archives materials on victims of the 1937-38 repressions in Abkhazia, historians and archive specialists from Sukhumi and Tbilisi continued to work on a series of historical events on which little information has so far been published, notably the 1931 Duripsch uprisings. The project stakeholders met in Rome on 18-19 April and Paris on 21 June. It is envisaged that the project will lead to a second publication of archive materials from the 1930s.

59. A training session on modern techniques and approaches to conservation of architectural heritage took place in Sukhumi on 27-28 June with the participation of local architects and Italian experts. In Tbilisi, the experts also met with the architects who have been active in the architectural project since its inception.

60. The Secretariat continued to implement the drugs prevention and treatment programme with drugs prevention and treatment professionals from Tbilisi and Sukhumi. Two of them participated in the Pompidou Group Executive Training on *“Evaluating the development, implementation and impact of drug policy”* including in its most recent module on 22-25 May 2018, in Venice. The project also helped to develop a common digital workspace between professionals, which was launched during the summer. Registration of participants on the platform has started with the view to discussing ideas of possible common work in the field of drug prevention.

CBMs with South Ossetia

61. Regrettably, the environment in South Ossetia has remained generally non-conducive to meaningful international engagement and confidence building. The Secretariat remains unable to obtain access in order to develop and implement tailored CBMs. Nonetheless, it has been possible to involve several participants from Tskhinvali in a number of existing projects.

(b) Plans for further action

62. Proposals for several initiatives are currently under discussion with the Georgian Government and stakeholders in Sukhumi (via the UN Liaison Mechanism). The non-exhaustive list below outlines some of the planned activities.

63. In the media field, the CoE has agreed to support the Caucasus Authors' Course (CAC), a unique school of journalism that brings together young journalists and trainers from across the Caucasus, including from the conflict-affected communities. A CAC course with media professionals was organised in Istanbul from 14 to 16 October and will focus challenges on journalistic investigation, including multimedia classes. This forum provides an opportunity to identify potential participants and topics for a possible new bilateral project between journalists.

64. The latest meeting in the framework of the project on archives materials took place in Venice, from 7 to 8 November. Publication, dissemination and presentation activities are planned during the first half of 2019.

65. The Secretariat is also working to renew dialogue on human rights issues between ombudspersons and professional groups from Sukhumi and Tbilisi. Following the appointment of the Ombudsperson in Sukhumi, possible arrangements were discussed during a meeting in Sukhumi. Discussions are underway on activities in the field of bilingual education, health care, women and children's rights, etc.

66. In order to maintain a minimum, appropriate level of contact between professionals across dividing lines, as well as stepping up the efforts of dialogue in different domains, adequate resources, both human and financial, should be considered. While it was possible to implement some of the activities thanks to a voluntary contribution under the Action Plan until the end of the year, funding needs will remain for 2019.