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Joint statement

***as delivered by* the**

Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Germany to the OSCE,

Ambassador Susanne Schütz,

during the 1517th Permanent Council of the OSCE

Current Issue: „The Human Rights Situation in Georgia“

Vienna, 10th April, 2025

Joint Statement

On the continuously deteriorating Human Rights Situation in Georgia

Thank you, Madam Chair,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czechia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Montenegro, Malta, Moldova, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and my own country Germany.

As OSCE participating States, we have committed to upholding and defending fundamental human rights, democracy, and the rule of law—not only within our own borders, but across our shared OSCE region. This commitment carries a responsibility: to hold each other accountable when we witness signs of democratic backsliding.

It is in this spirit that we express again our deep concern over the deteriorating human rights situation in Georgia. Since our last discussion in February, we have regretfully witnessed

Georgian authorities taking further steps away from their democratic and human rights commitments.

Madam Chair,

Our main concerns are threefold: the legislative restriction of civic space, the targeting of independent media, and the continued lack of accountability for excessive use of force by police, the use of indiscriminate violence by unidentified groups against peaceful protesters as well as unnecessarily long pre-trial detention periods and the reported ill-treatment of those in pre-trial detention.

The Foreign Agents Registration Act requires all individuals and organisations receiving foreign funding to register as so-called "Foreign Agents," with financial sanctions and criminal penalties imposed on those who refuse. We share ODIHR's concern that "this law, along with other recent legislative initiatives, could further curtail the activities of civil society organizations and human rights defenders by removing the safeguards needed for them to carry out their work". This law lacks the legal safeguards that prevent civil society, media and private individuals from being branded as instruments of foreign influence based solely on funding sources, which strongly suggests that this law is not about transparency, but about suppressing dissent and tightening the grip on civil society. This is of particular concern in view of the upcoming local elections.

We are also closely monitoring recent amendments to Georgia's electoral legislation. It is essential that any changes to the electoral framework enhance transparency and public trust, and that reforms are developed through inclusive dialogue and in line with OSCE commitments. Relatedly, we are concerned about legislative amendments undermining freedom of peaceful assembly, including the amendments to the Criminal and Administrative Offences Codes and the Law on Assemblies and Manifestations. The amendments undermine the principle of equal suffrage and restrict freedom of assembly, as stated in relevant ODIHR's and Venice Commission latest opinions. We urge the Georgian authorities to implement their recommendations.

Madam Chair,

We are alarmed by the escalating threats and intimidation faced by journalists in Georgia. The Public Defender's 2024 Human Rights Report highlights a significant decline in media freedom,

exacerbated by restrictive laws—such as the recent amendments to the Law on Broadcasting—and growing hostility toward journalists.

Notably, there have been incidents where journalists were being targeted by police while covering protests, including physical assaults and equipment seizures. Furthermore, reports of targeting journalists in exile and negative rhetoric from high-ranking officials and politicians have further eroded media freedom and increased risks for journalists.

We call for the immediate cessation of these practices and the immediate release of all arbitrarily detained journalists, including Mzia Amaghlobeli, who remains in detention on charges of up to 7 years in prison.

Finally, we remain deeply troubled by the persistent lack of accountability for police violence. We have seen no evidence of credible efforts by the Georgian authorities to investigate reports of disproportionate use of force against peaceful protesters, arbitrary detentions, excessive over-reliance on long pre-trial detention periods, and mistreatment of detainees.

We call on the Georgian authorities to take immediate action to protect the rights of those exercising their fundamental freedoms and to conduct a thorough investigation of the use of police force during peaceful protests since 28 November 2024 in order to hold those responsible for human rights violations to account. Failure to do so further undermines public trust in Georgia's institutions.

Madam Chair,

Despite repeated statements by Georgia reaffirming their commitment to dialogue and the OSCE principles and commitments, we have yet to see any concrete and genuine steps toward meaningful engagement. Instead, recent actions by the Georgian authorities have moved Georgia further away from democracy. We call on the Georgian authorities to open an inclusive dialogue with all political parties and civil society organisations in order to find peaceful and democratic solutions to the ongoing crisis.

We welcome recent statements by ODIHR and RFoM and strongly urge Georgia to continue to constructively engage with OSCE institutions and make use of their expertise. As fellow OSCE participating States, we will explore all available tools and mechanisms within the OSCE context going forward. In this spirit, we call on Georgian authorities to implement recommendations by ODIHR with regard to upcoming elections.

Our unwavering commitment to Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity remains unchanged. We stand steadfast in our support for the Georgian people and their pursuit of a democratic, stable and European future, and we remain ready to work with Georgia to ensure it upholds its international obligations and ensures that human rights and fundamental freedoms are fully respected.

Thank you, Madam Chair.