STATEMENT BY MR. VAKHTANG MAKHRABILISHVILI
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III COMMITTEE (AGENDA ITEM 62)
6 NOVEMBER, 2013
NEW YORK

Mr. High Commissioner,
Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,

First of all, allow me to state that Georgia fully associates itself with the statement made by the European Union; nevertheless, I would like to add some comments in my national capacity on an issue which remains on the top of the most challenging humanitarian problems.

I would like to thank the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. António Guterres, for his report under the present agenda item. Indeed, it is a very unfortunate fact that in the 21st century there are millions of forcefully displaced persons worldwide and the forced displacement is still significantly increasing.

I would like to use today’s opportunity and inform the respective delegates on the achievements made by Georgia in this regard during the last years and the challenges that remain.

The Government of Georgia fully assumes its responsibility of providing durable solutions to those affected by displacement, including refugees, stateless persons and asylum seekers residing on its territory, and is fully committed to guaranteeing their socio-economic rights.

Georgia has already undertaken significant steps in ensuring that its legislation and policies are in line with relevant international standards to safeguard the rights of stateless persons, refugees and internally displaced persons. In December 2011, Georgia ratified the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and adopted a new “Law on Refugees and Humanitarian Status”.
With significant international support, including that rendered by the UNHCR, the Government of Georgia executes a consistent policy to ensure the maximal integration of the displaced population into the Georgian society: Since 2009, up to 600 refugees were granted with Georgian citizenship; A new well-equipped European standard Asylum Seekers Centre was opened in 2010; Healthcare services have been developed; Manifold educational projects have been implemented and the displaced children are being integrated into the regular Georgian education system.

The Government of Georgia is thankful to the UNHCR for its continuous support in elaborating better policies for the displaced population and overcoming the existing challenges that still need to be effectively addressed.

Excellencies,

Unfortunately, the problem of forced displacement continues to be one of the most alarming and horrendous issues of my country. As you are aware, Georgia has suffered from ethnic cleansing, expulsion and human rights abuses of its population on the occupied territories of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia in the beginning of the 1990s and as recent as 2008. Despite the concerted efforts of the international community and the Government of Georgia, hundreds of thousands internally displaced persons are still deprived of their internationally recognized right to safe and dignified return. Moreover, the number of the IDPs in Georgia is still raising due to the intense installation of barbwire fences and other artificial obstacles along the occupation line in the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions, which has significantly affected the livelihoods and fundamental freedoms of the local population and thus, have led to the humanitarian crisis on the ground.

Notably, the process of the installation of barbwire fences was witnessed by the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs and highlighted in his report, which we had an opportunity to discuss in October.

The Government of Georgia spares no effort to provide the IDPs with durable housing solution and address their immediate needs. However, this is done without prejudice to the right of displaced persons to safe and dignified return – reiterated by the UN GA Resolutions. The only durable solution for them is a return to places of permanent residence.
I would also like to seize this opportunity and express our gratitude to the High Commissioner and his team for invaluable efforts within the Geneva International Discussions. Notwithstanding that our counterpart continues to disregard the applicability of internationally recognized principles and therefore there is no tangible result regarding this issue, the Government of Georgia deems the format to be extremely important for addressing outstanding humanitarian issues.

Georgia strongly counts on the continuation of UNHCR support in its efforts to address the existing humanitarian problems. We reiterate our readiness to preserve our fruitful cooperation and seek new approaches in dealing with the issue in concern.

I thank you.