Statement delivered by the Youth Delegate of Georgia  
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Mr. Chair, excellences, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I have the greatest honor to address this important international forum on behalf of the Georgian youth.

First of all, allow me to extend my deepest appreciation towards the United Nations for this unique opportunity of speaking before the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. I would also like to express my utmost gratitude to the government of Georgia for its continuous support to the Youth Delegate’s Program and hereby, let me also express my hope that in coming years many more countries from our region will follow this suite and empower young people to voice their concerns from the floor of the United Nations.

Today we are witnessing an extremely important momentum in the field of youth affairs:

At the national level, there are hundreds of youth-run and youth-specific organizations, youth ministries, departments and agencies. Additionally, as of this year, over 70% of the world nations either already have their national youth policies, or are in the process of developing ones. On this note, I would like to strongly salute the efforts undertaken by the government of Georgia to revise its National Youth policy document and develop the first-ever national action plan on youth.

At the United Nations, we now have a Secretary General’s special envoy on youth, Youth Representatives from across the world, Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, System-wide Action Plan on Youth and hopefully, there will soon be a permanent UN Panel on Youth.

This does not definitely imply that United Nations has achieved its full potential. Unfortunately, challenges remain; young people lack decent access to media, funding and employment opportunities; they lack regular and institutionalized mechanisms of engagement with their governments and international organizations, including the United Nations.

Mr. Chair,

I am deeply humbled to have the opportunity of contributing to the United Nations efforts to listen and act upon the voices and concerns of the world’s young people.

For the last three months, as the Youth Delegate of Georgia, I had an opportunity of meeting with thousands of youngsters, I traveled to cities, towns and villages, I visited universities, schools and youth organizations, active student groups and individual youngsters to listen to their concerns and connect their ideas to the work of the United Nations. And I have to admit, the takeaway from our communication has been rewarding and thought-provoking at the same time. The following are the areas that need to be dealt with in an expedited and systemic manner:

- Although the Government of Georgia prioritizes education in its national programs, in some rural areas youth still lack decent educational opportunities, including geographic accessibility of schools, qualified teachers and school facilities/infrastructure;

- It is an overall trend both in Georgia and the rest of the world, that there is a substantial potential among the youth to develop their capacities, especially in the field of technologies. However, there is a negative correlation between the existing youth potential and its actual translation into employment opportunities;
- It was encouraging to find out that many youngsters seek further engagement of their disabled peers in the country’s political, social and economic life. However, further national efforts need to be undertaken to advance the rights of the disabled youth.

One more important point from my meetings with the youth is that young population face major injustice on a daily basis in the form of military occupation of two regions of Georgia – Abkhazia, Georgia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia.

Mr, Chair,

One of the main highlights of my statement is the issue of youth in conflict settings, specifically as it concerns to my home country. As a young man who has personally experienced the evils of war as my high school was bombed and my neighborhood and town was under military attack in 2008, this experience allows me to elaborate on how grave the impacts of armed conflicts are on the lives of the youth, and what the United Nations role should be to respond to these issues.

As I address this forum today, many of my peers back home are still subject to repressions on a daily basis: More than 350 000 ethnic Georgians forcefully expelled from their homes in Abkhazia, Georgia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia as a result of three waves of forceful displacement and ethnic cleansing in early 90s and in 2008, are deprived of their right to safe, dignified and voluntary return to their homes.

Those few thousand ethnic Georgians remaining under the Russian occupation in Gali, Tkvarcheli, Ochamchire, Akhalgori and Sachkhere districts are deprived of fundamental human rights, including their right to education in their native language, etc.

Mr. Chair,

Less than a week ago the world celebrated the 23rd anniversary of the German Unification. It is symbolic that on the same day, several Georgian families were expelled from their homes in the villages of Ditsi and Dvani along the occupation line simply because their households appeared beyond the barbed wires and iron fences that Russian troops keep installing to divide peoples like the Berlin Wall divided the German nation decades ago. Despite the international call, the Russian Federation continues to blatantly violate the fundamental rights and freedoms of the population residing in the occupied territories and their vicinity, including, but not limited to the rights to free movement, education in native language and other civil, economic and cultural rights.

In protest to these illegal activities, recently the Georgian youth, including students from various universities nationwide, organized series of protest rallies along the occupation line. As the youth representative of Georgia, I fully share the spirit of this movement.

Our message to the world is clear: if we allow injustice in the two occupied regions of Georgia today, next day it may extend to the entire country, and if we allow injustice to prevail in Georgia, at the end of the day it will have regional or wider implications.

Therefore, on behalf of the young people of Georgia, I call upon the United Nations to support undertaking of appropriate and effective measures to end illegal activities in the occupied regions of Georgia and its vicinity and to underscore the need for establishing international security and monitoring mechanisms. It is important that the United Nations responds to violations of fundamental human rights in conflict affected areas not only in times of high crisis but also in times of peace.

In this light, I would like to take this opportunity and join the international community in condemning gross human rights violations in Syria and elsewhere, in particular when they are directed against the young population.

I thank you for your attention.