

Geneva Discussions - Role Playing

Role play is a simulation exercise where persons take on assumed roles in order to act out a scenario in a contrived setting. The students who play the roles of Geneva Discussions participants will improve their communication skills, as well as will study ways to provide information and will improve their ability to express their concern and present good arguments to demonstrate the need for action.

A role-play, simulating a Geneva Discussions centers on concerns over worsening security situation and conditions of local population adjacent to the ABL. This can provoke discussion about the importance of these issues for reconciliation efforts.

Geneva Discussions modalities

The role play will replicate the October 7, 2015 meeting in the Palais des Nations in Geneva. Meeting is moderated by an EU representative, together with other two co-chairs (UN and OSCE). All parties will be expected to make brief introductory statements and the agenda for the day will be finalized. Working language is English. There are no written records of discussions, but a summary of conclusions and/or recommendations will be noted by the co-chairs.

Teams

Groups are composed of four, five students. Students in each group act out the relevant role script provided for each of the six groups. They will receive introduction to the problem and will be encouraged to participate in an open discussion in order to put all the relevant issues on the table. Students are requested to think about the problems in depth prior to the team role playing.

Terminology

The terms of “Republic of Abkhazia and the Republic of South Ossetia” are used in this role play only with the aim to present authentic atmosphere of speeches delivered by participants from separatists regions of Georgia at Geneva Discussions.

The scenario and instructions

Background information for role playing

The 33rd round of Geneva International Discussions was held October 7, 2015 in a constructive atmosphere with frank and open exchanges that proceeded despite persistent divergent views.

Participants discussed security-related issues and assessed the overall situation on the ground as relatively calm and stable.

They recalled tensions in July/August over the erection of demarcation signs along the South Ossetian administrative boundary line (ABL).

An exchange on the joint statement on non-use of force took place with limited progress due to continuing different narratives on the conflict.

Freedom of movement, both across the ABL as well as externally was discussed in a controversial manner and largely from a confrontational status-related perspective. Attempts to bring in pragmatic approaches in the interest of the affected population were only marginally accepted.

Regarding humanitarian issues, participants substantively discussed issues relating to multilingual education and languages of instruction in Gali schools, freedom of movement and mobility, missing persons, environmental and cultural heritage.

The issue of IDPs and refugees was also raised. Participants agreed to convene the next round of GID on 8-9 December 2015.

The Role Play – 33rd round of Geneva Discussions

1) Group playing the role of Co-Chairs (EU, UN, OSCE) (5 students)

Role script

The co-chairs present their introductory report consisting of following points:

- Introduce an agenda items (security situation at ground, non-use of force, borderisation, etc)
- Reiterate their appeal to participants to engage constructively on all agenda items in the future.
- The overall security situation is assessed by co-chairs as overall relatively calm and stable
- Mention that recent months have seen an increase in incidents along the ABL as well as an increasing number of Russian-led military exercises in the broader region.
- Underline the importance of restraint and avoiding low level incidents to spiral out of control
- Inform the participants, that their field visits in September mainly aimed at building a consensus on a compromise formula, which allowed for holding a stable 33rd Geneva discussions round and for shifting the debates from organisational issues to the substance of the various agenda items.
- Praise the responsible behaviour of security actors in calming down the situation and avoiding an escalation.
- In this context, the Incident Prevention and Response mechanism (IPRM) and the hotline are highlighted as instrumental in ensuring stability.
- Similarly, the continued disruption of the IPRM in the Abkhaz theatre is seen as a critical shortcoming and co-chairs call on participants to find a compromise to resume the IPRM's work.
- Invite all interlocutors to assess the paradox of the current situation where on the one hand all agree on the importance of preserving the Geneva Discussions and acknowledge that a lot of substance is on the negotiation table for consideration, but on the other hand the discussions are blocked over disagreements on organizational issues, which are mainly motivated by considerations over the status issue.
- The Co-Chairs warn the participants that another disrupted Geneva round round will put the entire Geneva process at risk of collapse.
- Propose that for the 33rd Geneva Discussions round the item "Returns" remain formally on the agenda, but that discussion under this item takes place in an ad hoc experts group, which could meet in the margins of the Geneva Discussionss round.

Two broader issues of concern are raised by co-chairs:

- the Abkhaz high level statements regarding a possible closure of crossing points along the Abkhaz administrative boundary line (ABL), which could potentially significantly impact the freedom of movement and other basic rights of the local population there; and
 - the revised crossing regime along the South Ossetian ABL, which could further limit the freedom of movement there
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- The Co-Chairs point out that while mobility is considered important - amongst other issues for confidence building - existing practice creates difficulties for the population (e.g. Abkhaz passport holders not being able to get visas in their Russian passports for travel to the EU);
 - This among others creates difficulties for longer term conflict resolution.
 - Regarding non-use of force (NUF) and international security arrangements, co-chairs try to unlock the stalled discussions on a joint statement of participants on non-use of force.
 - They introduce a recapitulation paper to review of the elements in the process so far and list suggestions on possible ways ahead.
 - Call on the participants to engage constructively in drafting a joint statement on the non-use of force
 - Call on the participants to share their comments on the latest version of the draft statement distributed by the co-chairs
 - Point out that mediation by the UN, OSCE and the EU is a long-term process, and patience and resolve are needed to move forward
 - Further steps are needed to improve freedom of movement of local population
 - Invite interlocutors in Tbilisi and Sukhumi to continue working towards a consensus which could allow for a prompt resumption of the activities of the Gali-IPRM.
 - They also call upon interlocutors in Sukhumi and Tskhinvali to bring clarity on the issuance of new documents to ethnic Georgians and to preserve their basic rights, in particular with regard to crossing the administrative boundary line and owning property.
 - The Co-Chairs encourage participants to move beyond their established positions, to listen and learn from each other.

2) Group playing the role of Abkhaz participants

(5 students)

Role script

- Abkhaz participants stress that since this is a European conflict, the EU could not ignore the questions constantly raised by the Abkhaz side, particularly with regard to the de-isolation of Abkhaz citizens in relation to their interaction with the outside world.
- Call for progress on *Freedom of Movement* with a special focus on opportunities for travels abroad (*visa issue*) and life-cycle documents (*birth/death certificates, validity of diplomas, etc.*) for Abkhaz.
- Raise recent cases of rejection by EU member States of visa applications submitted by students, which they characterized as an EU support to a policy of "isolation" by Georgia.
- Highlighting that the US had no problem in delivering visas on Russian passports delivered in Sukhumi and Tskhinvali, Abkhaz insisted that the issue should remain high on the agenda of the Geneva Discussions.
- Reiterate their demand to either take the issue of *IDPs and Refugees* off the agenda of the Geneva Discussions or to be offered the possibility to express their views on the issue to key delegations in New York in the context of the Georgian sponsored UN General Assembly resolution on IDPs.
- Although calling for a suspension of the discussions on *IDPs and Refugees* issues in the Geneva, Abkhaz express a high interest in the topic, being interested in an acknowledgement that a return process has taken place in Gali.
- Dismiss the issue of 'borderisation' as a non-issue and a sovereign right of Abkhazia addressing the necessity to protect the 'state border' against criminality.
- Show interest in progressing on non-use of force statement. Abkhaz agrees with the co-chairs proposal to continue the drafting process on a joint statement on non-use of force during the next round of Discussions.
- See a legally binding non-use of force statement with Georgia with international guarantees as the core and the only way to ensure security.
- Commenting on the issue of complicating the free movement of persons across the ABL the Abkhaz refer to statistics on numbers of crossings, stressing that the figures were and will remain high.
- The Abkhaz participants express regret that their previous decision to open four additional crossing points on their ABL had not led to any changes in a policy of "isolation" by Tbilisi.
- In this respect, they characterize the refusal by EU Member States to grant visa to holders of Russian passports issued in Sukhumi as a discriminatory obstacle to the freedom of movement – and listed examples where adverse impact on life of individuals and communities was apparent (including, as per the above, on Confidence building measures).
- Criticize lack of constructive response from the Georgians aimed to take real steps to resolve the conflict

- As part of discussion on cultural heritage, Abkhaz participants make a presentation on churches requiring restoration and asked for the deployment of an international expert with background in Byzantine architecture who could put forward recommendations to this end.
- Express readiness to resume regular meetings in Gali under the IPRM (Incident Prevention & Response Mechanism).
- Despite the difficulty of obtaining concrete results, the Abkhaz side stress that it was essential that Abkhazia to continues to participate in the negotiation process,
- Confirm that Geneva Discussions as the unique high international platform to date is important because there Abkhazia has the means to present their views directly to representatives of the EU, US, UN and OSCE, which contributes to the formation of a more constructive approach to the relations between the EU and the United States and the Republic of Abkhazia.
- Present arguments on the need to demarcation of the border with in absence of legal guarantees on the non-use of force from Georgian side
- Georgian guaranties are vital for the safety of Abkhaz people.

3) Group playing the role of Georgian participants

(5 students)

Role script

- Stress the need to secure stable GID rounds and to promote more opportunities for informal bilateral discussions in their margins.
- Prefer to continue with the current agenda and to discourage disturbances by the Abkhaz and South Ossetian participants under IDPs and refugees issues, which had been the reason for several disruptions of recent GID rounds.
- Reiterate that the current modalities of the Geneva Discussions should remain unchanged.
- Inform about ongoing internal consultations on a possible release of South Ossetian and Abkhaz detainees on an all-for-all basis and on a renewed and promising investigation into the fate of the three missing Ossetian youths that had vanished in the aftermath of the 2008 conflict and have since been a continued issue of discussion in both the IPRM and the GID.
- Ask to address human rights issues more prominently in the Geneva Discussions and to work towards the deployment of human rights monitors in the entities (Abkhazia and South Ossetia).
- Raise strong concerns that the ongoing introduction of the Russian language in eleven formerly Georgian-language schools located in the lower part of the Gali District in Abkhazia leaving only a few hours of the Georgian language being taught as a subject (not language of instruction).
- Express their fear that this could lead to some Georgian families deciding to re-settle on Tbilisi-administered territory.
- They also explain about their expectation that the Geneva Discussions should achieve concrete results on humanitarian cross-ABL activities, such as visits to cemeteries, “go and see” visits, water sharing arrangements, etc.
- Show interest in progressing on non-use of force statement. Agree with the co-chairs proposal to continue the drafting process on a joint statement on non-use of force during the next round of Discussions.
- Focus on the security situation in the occupied regions and their adjacent areas that continues to pose a direct threat to stability in the country.
- Condemn the installation of barbwire fences and embankments by the Russian occupation forces along the occupation line in the Tskhinvali and Abkhazia regions that has further intensified and extended in the recent months.
- Point out that deteriorating security situation in the occupied regions proves the crucial importance of the creation of effective international security arrangements therein
- Criticize that regardless of a unilateral legally binding commitment to non-use of force made by the Georgian President in 2010 and reiterated by the Parliament of Georgia in March 2013, the Russian Federation still fails to undertake a reciprocal pledge.
- Call upon the Russian side to make a unilateral legally-binding declaration on non-use of force.

- Value the efforts of the co-Chairs - EU, UN and OSCE - in facilitating the Moscow's pledge on non-use of force and believe that their initiative to advance work on a draft Statement by the participants of the Geneva International Discussions on non-use of force on expert level has been a step in a right direction.
- Encourage all participants to constructively engage in the drafting process on expert level, and again reiterated their readiness to reflect on the key aspects of the document during the discussions.
- The Georgian participants express readiness to co-operate on the preservation of a common Georgian/Abkhaz/Ossetian cultural heritage, provided that UNESCO is involved and that Georgian experts participate in any field visits.
- Georgians agree with the co-chairs proposal to continue the drafting process on a joint statement on non-use of force during the next round of Discussions

4) Group playing the role of South Ossetia**(5 students)**Role script

- Challenge the standing agenda and wish to include new standing items (missing persons, de-isolation) while removing the item on international security arrangements and returns (the latter unless Georgian participants refrain from raising the issue of return of Georgian IDPs in the UN General Assembly).
- Reiterate their demand to either take the issue of *IDPs and Refugees* off the agenda of the Geneva Discussions or to be offered the possibility to express their views on the issue to key delegations in New York in the context of the Georgian sponsored UN General Assembly resolution on IDPs.
- Although calling for a suspension of the discussions on *IDPs and Refugees* issues in the Geneva, South Ossetians expressed a high interest in the topic, being interested in an acknowledgement of various forced displacements of ethnic Ossetians, especially during the Georgian-Ossetian conflict in 1989-1992.
- Raise expectations that the Geneva Discussions should work towards
 - a joint statement on the *Non-Use of Force*,
 - a release of detainees on an all-for-all basis, and
 - progress on missing persons and in particular regarding the three Ossetians who went missing in October 2008.
- Dismiss the issue of 'borderisation' as a non-issue and a sovereign right of South Ossetia addressing the necessity to protect the 'state border' against criminality.
- Show keen interest in progressing on non-use of force statement. Agree with the co-chairs proposal to continue the drafting process on a joint statement on non-use of force during the next round of Discussions.
- See a legally binding non-use of force statement with international guarantees as the core and the only way to ensure security.
- Call for an acceleration of the preparatory work for the conclusion of legally binding bilateral agreements on non- use of force between Georgia and the Republic of South Ossetia
- Propose to adopt the joint declaration by participants regarding the non-use of force as an important intermediate step towards the preparation of legally binding agreements and as support of earlier statements by the Presidents of South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Georgia on the non-use of force.
- Criticize the non-constructive position of the Georgian delegation that prevented the adoption of such new joint statement
- Note the effectiveness and usefulness of the IPRM for stability and security on the border of Georgia and South Ossetia
- Reiterate that all the work of the South Ossetian side concerning the establishment and marking the state border of the Republic of North Ossetia with Georgia are conducted full compliance with the sovereign right and the law of the Republic of South Ossetia and help ensure the stability of the state border.

- Call Georgia to engage in a joint work of delimitation and demarcation of the state border
- Present arguments on the need to develop the border with Georgia following the decision taken in this regard by the authorities in absence of legal guarantees on the non-use of force from Georgian side as vital for the safety of their people and their countries.

5) Group playing the role of the US participants**(5 students)**Role script

- Inform that the U.S. government had lifted all restrictions for obtaining a U.S. visa by the Abkhaz and South Ossetian citizens traveling with Russian passports issued by the Russian consulates of Sukhumi and Tskhinvali (*This differs significantly from the position of EU countries via the channel of the policy of Georgia intended to internationally isolate Abkhazia*).
- Discussions continue to serve as a valuable forum as all participants work to decrease tensions in the region, improve security on the ground, and address the humanitarian needs of those affected by this conflict.
- Appreciate the continued leadership of the United Nations, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe as co-chairs of these discussions.
- Reiterate that the construction of physical barriers along the Administrative Boundary Lines for the occupied Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia undermine joint efforts to reach a negotiated solution to this conflict, and have a negative impact on those living in areas affected by the conflict.
- These barriers are inconsistent with Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and contrary to Russia's international commitments; their removal would be an important step towards building peace and security, and restoring freedom of movement within the internationally-recognized territory of Georgia
- Commend the government of Georgia for meeting these provocative activities with patience, which underscores yet again its commitment to a peaceful settlement and the non-use of force in resolving this conflict.
- Join the co-chairs in calling for a timely resumption of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism in Gali as a means of improving communication and mitigating tensions on the ABL for the Abkhazia region
- Note that the surest way to increase trust between the parties and improve the lives of people on the ground would be to grant access across the boundary line for all people, humanitarian organizations, and the EU Monitoring Mission.
- There are people whose farms are being divided, the people whose cemeteries are being divided, the people who are now cut off from relatives and family across the ABL
- This negative step is not consistent with Russia's obligations under the 2008 accords. It's not helpful in terms of regional stability and security
- Strongly supports Georgia's expression of concern about the impact of 'borderisation'
- The co-chairs did a very good job of steering discussions. This is not easy task.

6) Group playing the role of Russian participants**(5 students)**Role script

- Support the South Ossetian and Abkhaz participants in challenging the standing agenda and inclusion of a new standing items (missing persons, de-isolation) while removing the item on international security arrangements and returns (the latter unless Georgian participants refrain from raising the issue of return of Georgian IDPs in the UN General Assembly).
- Dismiss the issue of 'borderisation' as a non-issue and a sovereign right of Abkhazia and South Ossetia addressing the necessity to protect the 'state border' against criminality
- Regarding the non-use of force statement according the Russian Federation no Russian statement is required, as the conflict is between Georgia and its entities
- Recall that in August 2008, during the process of resolving the consequences of the attack of the Saakashvili regime on South Ossetia, the Presidents of Russia Medvedev and France Sarkozy have focused of international discussion on *"lasting security in Abkhazia and South Ossetia"* this objective continue to be central to the work of the group responsible for security issues
- Propose to adopt a joint declaration of all participants of the Geneva process on non-use of force
- Express optimism and hope for more flexible and constructive approach of the Georgian delegation after the election of the new President of Georgia on the eve of our meeting
- Reminds that the Co-Chairs of the Geneva Discussions must, by definition, be impartial in their approach to topics and pay special attention to the control of their public statements
- Point out that non-diplomatic statements unilaterally supporting the position of one of the participants in the negotiation process does not contribute to success from this point of view
- State that there was no "cease-fire" agreement adopted and signed after the failure of the Georgian aggression in August 2008. What exists is only Medvedev - Sarkozy agreement which consists of a Plan settlement of the conflict in six points dated 12 August 2008 and measures for its implementation dated 8 September 2008.
- According to this plan the "armed forces of the Russian Federation withdrew to the line at the beginning of the fighting" what the Russia has fully fulfilled by the 10 October 2008
- Criticize that some advocates of "the territorial integrity of Georgia" continue to assert that the presence of Russian military bases and troops of border guards in Abkhazia and South Ossetia are against above mentioned agreements
- According to RF the Republic of Abkhazia and the Republic of South Ossetia are no more territories of Georgia, but sovereign states recognized by the Russian Federation.