

CONFLICT SENSITIVE APPROACHES TO DONOR ENGAGEMENT IN GEORGIA

Recommendations for the Donors' Conference on Georgia, Brussels, 22nd October 2008

Following the Joint Needs Assessment undertaken in October, the upcoming Donors' Conference for Georgia provides an opportunity for the international community to act collectively around a common understanding of the challenges facing the peoples and communities in Georgia and the wider region. There is the potential for the Conference to address not only priorities for immediate recovery, but also for future peace, security and stability.

In order to ensure the effectiveness of its aid the donor community will need to develop, in consultation with the populations concerned, a deepened and shared understanding of the context and dynamics of the conflicts in which assistance will be delivered, including that:

- the violent conflict created not only a humanitarian crisis, but continues to have a significant impact on economic, political and social stability in the country and the wider region
- ordinary people – Georgian, Abkhaz, Ossetian and other minority groups – are traumatised, and feel insecure and apprehensive about the future
- the conflicts are not resolved and their underlying causes have not been addressed – indeed they have become more prominent following the violence
- consequently, there remains the potential for crisis scenarios to re-emerge and a return to violent conflict in the future remains a real possibility
- the violent conflict exposed shortfalls in the overall international response, including the role and impact of aid, to the regional conflict dynamics.

Consequently, in this fragile and uncertain context, and learning from the impact of past international responses, careful consideration should be given to the nature of assistance offered and the manner in which it is distributed. In this regard, donor assistance should reference the approaches and actions agreed in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the subsequent 'Accra Agenda for Action' (September 2008).

In response to these challenges, the undersigned organisations, based upon their history of engagement in the Caucasus, recommend that donor agencies take the following principles and approaches into consideration when designing their assistance – especially those governments and institutions that have signed up to the OECD Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations:

1. **Donors should analyse the context and ensure their aid is conflict sensitive** – Donors should base their assistance on a thorough and shared assessment of the conflict dynamics – taking all perspectives into account – and respond to the causes of conflict and insecurity sensitively.
2. **Donors should focus on conflict prevention and long-term peacebuilding** – beyond responding rapidly to immediate needs, donors need to attend to long-term funding modalities in order to bridge the gap

between immediate humanitarian and recovery needs, on the one side, and future stabilisation and peacebuilding goals on the other. The potential positive or negative role foreign assistance can play in supporting future peace must be factored into assistance planning and delivery.

3. **Donors should address the needs of all communities** – donor support should be focused on meeting the needs of each community affected by conflict, including communities in and from Abkhazia and South Ossetia. To this end assistance should be provided without hindrance and in an inclusive manner through engagement with the range of actors operating in each affected area. As these populations should not become isolated, it is essential that their ability to engage with international actors, including NGOs, be ensured. Further, donor assistance should encourage local authorities to find durable solutions for all internally displaced persons, including those displaced by previous conflicts.
4. **Donors should support accountable and responsive governance** – at this critical time for Georgia, it is essential that donors firmly establish the critical link between democratic governance, public reforms and the agenda for long term peace. As such, a substantial part of international assistance should be dedicated to strengthening and deepening democratic reforms in Georgia as a foundation for future peace.
5. **Donors should promote accountability within assistance mechanisms and engage with civil society** – in support of the previous principles and given the sensitivities in Georgia and the wider region, it is essential that the mechanisms for delivering assistance are transparent and accountable and support responsive governance. The role of Government in monitoring, tracking and assessing aid is important. However, this process should be expanded to include consultation and monitoring not only by parliament and local authorities, but also civil society organisations representative of Georgians, Abkhaz and Ossetians, as well as other minority groups.

The undersigned organisations recommend that donors commit to developing these themes in their response to the August crisis. Together with other concerned actors, we are ready to engage with donor organisations on practical ways to implement this approach. In the spirit of this dialogue, we also recommend that the Joint Needs Assessment is made available for public comment as an important step in generating consensus on a way forward.

Sincerely,

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