



Statement by H.E. Helga Hauksdóttir

Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Iceland

at the 1476 Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council,

Vienna, 31 May 2024

Madam Chair,

The Nordic and Baltic States, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, and Sweden, have steadfastly supported Georgia's democratic and economic development since the restoration of its independence. We remain deeply committed to seeing Georgia thrive as a sovereign, democratic nation integrated into the European and Euro-Atlantic community.

However, today, we express our profound concern regarding the recent adoption by Georgia's ruling majority of the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence. The Venice Commission has highlighted the substantial risk that the law will disproportionately target associations and media critical of the government, thereby undermining open, informed public debate, pluralism, and democracy.

Madam Chair,

It is imperative that human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, are protected. Civil society and free media

play a crucial role in any democracy, and measures that undermine their work are unacceptable. We urge Georgia's political leaders to change course and to repeal the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence.

The ODIHR consistently offers its expertise and assistance to ensure that national laws and policies are compatible with OSCE commitments and international human rights standards and published a note on the legislative initiative in July 2023. Many of the concerns expressed in the note remain highly relevant also in relation to the law which is now adopted. During his recent visit to Georgia, ODIHR Director Matteo Mecacci reiterated ODIHR's readiness to collaborate with the Georgian authorities to safeguard the freedom of association and prevent the stigmatization of civil society organizations and emphasized the importance of upholding the right to freedom of peaceful assembly.

The Nordic and Baltic States have stood by Georgia in defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity after Russia's military invasion in 2008, where an occupying force is maintaining its presence in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Our partnership with Georgia, built over 32 years on shared values, remains unwavering. We will continue to support the Georgian people in their pursuit of a prosperous, democratic future within Europe.

I thank you.