



Permanent Mission of Georgia to the United Nations

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Agenda item: "The rule of law at the national and international levels"

Statement by Ms. Inga Kanchaveli, Counselor

PERMANENT MISSION OF GEORGIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

(Please check against delivery)

Mr. Chairman,

Today's important discussion reinforces the notion that rule of law constitutes a fundamental element to peace and security, development and respect of human rights at the national and international levels. Georgia reiterates its full support for the UN, to strengthen the implementation of International law, anchored in the Charter of the United Nations. Indeed, world would be a better place if the international relations among the member states were governed by the rule of law.

Peaceful settlement of international disputes is one of the core elements of the rule of law at the international level. We do believe that expanding the scope of justiciability of international disputes is vital to enhance the efficiency of international institutions in the peaceful settlement of international disputes. The International Court of Justice (ICJ), the World Court as it is otherwise referred – the principle judicial organ of the United Nations has a key role to that end and we call upon all states that have not yet done so to accept the compulsory jurisdiction of the ICJ in accordance with its Statute.

Rule of Law is indeed a key element of conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution and peace-building, with justice, as a critical element for achieving peace and security in countries in conflict and post-conflict situations. Georgia supports an effective and efficient interplay between national justice systems and the International Criminal Court in the fight against impunity, in accordance with the principles enshrined in the Rome Statute.

In this view, my Government has been working to adjust Georgian legislation to best international standards, and intends to continue and further its work in this direction. Georgia is party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and the Parliament of Georgia has adopted the Law on Cooperation with the International Criminal Court. We made a further step on 1 October

2014 when the Parliament of Georgia ratified the Kampala amendments to the Statute of ICC on the crime of aggression.

Mr. Chairman,

As the Secretary-General notes in his report, “independent, efficient and competent judicial systems are the backbone of the rule of law, providing legitimate and peaceful means to solve conflicts, ensure accountability and provide redress.”^aAs a part of the overarching goal to establish and enhance functional democracy, uphold principles of transparency, accountability and the rule of law, justice sector reforms continue to be the top priority for the Government of Georgia.

Georgia started judicial system reform in 2012. The reform was aimed at de-politicizing and strengthening the independence of the High Council of Justice and a number of other institutions of the judicial self-government. The enacted amendments ensure participation of judges in the formation of the High Council of Justice and a decision-making process on the judicial system in general. In November 2013, constitutional amendment introducing the life tenure for judges entered into force. The following stage of reform focused on the guarantees for independence of judges.

Aimed at strengthening institutional independence of the prosecution service and ensuring its impartiality, the Law of Georgia on Prosecution was amended in May 2013. Prosecutorial powers formerly vested with the Minister of Justice were transferred to the Chief Prosecutor.

At this stage an intense and a comprehensive process is ongoing to liberalize, modernize and refine the Criminal Code in line with international and European standards, which has led to the revision of over two hundred articles of the Code.

Legal aid programmes are a central component of strategies to enhance access to justice. The new Law of Georgia on Legal Aid Service ensures independence, accountability and transparency of the Legal Aid Service and reinforces social guarantees for public lawyers. The Legal Aid Service is now an independent institution accountable to the Parliament. Based on the needs assessment survey, new consultation centers were opened in mountainous regions, regions populated by ethnic minorities and other areas outside of the regional centers.

Mr. Chairman,

In April 2014 Georgia adopted the National Strategy on Human Rights for 2014-2020 aimed at ensuring the implementation of obligations related to the respect of human rights with a view to build a unified, and consistent policy. The Strategy explicitly requires from the state to respect, protect, fulfill and promote human rights. The Strategy aims to ensure that every person in Georgia understands the essence of his or her rights and is capable of implementing these rights in practice with a view to ensuring wellbeing and dignified life.

Mr. Chairman,

Strengthening and promoting the rule of law is our common responsibility. In view of this, Georgia stands ready to join efforts with the international community for the advancement of the rule of law around the globe.

I thank you.