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PROTRACTED CONFLICTS IN THE GUAM AREA AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE, SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT [Item 35], (b) Draft Resolution (A.75/L.99)

16 June 2021

**Statement by H.E. The Hon. Mitch Fifield,
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the
United Nations**

Mr President,

I have the distinct pleasure to deliver the following remarks on behalf of the CANZ countries, namely Canada, Australia and New Zealand, on the occasion of the adoption of the resolution on the Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia.

CANZ is concerned by the forced demographic changes resulting from the conflicts in Georgia, and the humanitarian situation caused by armed conflict in 2008, which resulted in the forced displacement of civilians.

We welcome the General Assembly's recognition of the right of return of all internally displaced persons and refugees and their descendants, regardless of ethnicity, to their homes throughout Georgia. We reiterate our support for the respect and protection of human rights, including the rights of forcibly displaced persons, as well as enabling their safe, voluntary, dignified and unhindered return to their homes, in accordance with international law.

More broadly, CANZ is concerned that the EU-mediated Ceasefire Agreement, that was concluded between Georgia and Russia in 2008, remains largely unfulfilled. The process of so called "borderisation" – that is, the erection of razor-barbed-wire fences and other artificial obstacles along the administrative boundary line, and the denial of access to international human rights monitors to the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions – represents a grave deterioration the humanitarian situation on the ground.

These acts prolong the conflict, threaten peace and stability, interfere with the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and negatively impact the health and safety of people across Georgia, destabilizing the region as a whole.

CANZ calls on all parties to facilitate immediate access for international humanitarian organizations to populations in need, to implement the obligations and commitments under the Ceasefire Agreement.

Last but not least, CANZ unequivocally reaffirms its support for Georgia's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

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