

Action Plan for Conflict Transformation in Georgia

The present action plan is based on the conceptual document (2024) created by the expert group assembled in the frames of the joint project of the Center for **Cultural Relations – Caucasian House, the Institute for the study of Nationalism and Conflicts, and the Levan Mikeladze Foundation**, which addresses the transformation of the Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-Ossetian conflicts. Additionally, it relies on the analysis of a [quantitative study conducted by CRRC-Georgia](#) in 2024, commissioned by the aforementioned organizations, centered around the issues of conflict and peace. It also reflects years of observation and analysis of the work of civil society organizations and the state institutions on peace related issues. It is worth noting that the aforementioned conceptual document and research mostly focus on the attitudes and perceptions of Georgian society towards conflicts, and, accordingly, the addressees of this action plan are mainly actors on the Georgian side. However, in some cases, recommendations are also relevant to international organizations and donors.

As with the expert vision, the full implementation of the action plan mostly depends on Georgia’s success in the European integration process. Furthermore, it is based on the understanding that even if the Russian factor is neutralized, these conflicts will not be resolved automatically. Therefore, concrete septs are needed here and now—ones that are realistic and are not based on expectations beyond the control of the Georgian government, Georgian society, or people living in the occupied territories.

Goal: Systemization, increasing efficiency and mobilization of broad political and public support for the peaceful conflict transformation process in Georgia		Comment: According to the 2024 quantitative survey administered by CRRC Georgia, in response to the question as to how they envision restoration of the Georgian central authorities’ control over the occupied territories, only 1% of respondents supported the use of military force. This indicates a broad consensus among the population that there is no alternative to peaceful approaches. Additionally, when asked whether it is possible to improve Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-Ossetian relations before the restoration of Georgia's territorial integrity, 59% of respondents answered positively. Accordingly, the majority of society believes that a positive transformation of conflicts is possible before their final resolution.
1. Objective: Raise awareness about conflict transformation in Georgian society		
Activities to be Implemented:	Responsible Actors:	Clarification/comments, possible concrete steps
1.1 Organize public discussions and debates around the nature and significance of conflict transformation approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Civil society organizations working on conflict issuesInternational/donor organizationsGovernment of Georgia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">It is advisable to hold these discussions with conflict-affected communities and various professional groups (e.g., journalists, policy experts, students, artists, etc.) in Tbilisi and regional centers.Discussions should cover the following topics:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Overview of the current state of Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-Ossetian relationsPolitical and human rights situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia/Tskhinvali regionHuman, political, and economic costs of conflictsGrowing alienation between societies divided by conflictThe significance of conflict transformation approach and its necessity for conflict regulationDiscussions should also address the gender dimension of conflicts and the role of women in reconciliation processes.
1.2 Promote conflict transformation discourse in the television	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Television mediaOrganizations working on conflict issuesInternational/donor organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">According to the 2024 CRRC quantitative survey, the majority of the population (56%) consider themselves poorly or completely uninformed about current events in Abkhazia and South Ossetia/Tskhinvali Region. The main source of information about these regions (76%) is Georgian-language TV channels.Georgian TV outlets should address this gap by systematically covering relevant current events and producing analytical programs. For example, the Georgian Law on Broadcasting designates coverage of events related to the occupied territories as a program priority for the Public Broadcaster.Relevant thematic documentaries can be produced and broadcast in collaboration with organizations working on conflict issues, television channels, and international/donor organizations.
1.3 Promote conflict transformation discourse in social and online media outlets	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Donor organizationsOnline media outletsSocial media channelsSocial media influencersCivil society organizations working on conflict issuesDonor organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">According to the 2024 CRRC quantitative survey, the most important sources of information about ongoing events in Abkhazia and South Ossetia/Tskhinvali Region are online outlets (30%) and social media (31%).Georgian online outlets should be encouraged to produce analytical articles on developments in the conflict-affected regions, as well as audio-visual content.Conflict-related organizations should establish cooperation with creators of analytical YouTube shows and podcasts.Collaboration between peace organizations and relevant influencers is crucial for addressing current issues and combating disinformation related to the conflict.

1.4 Facilitate information and solidarity campaigns on conflict transformation and confidence-Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil society organizations working on conflict issues • International/donor organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting information campaigns with clear messaging is essential to raise public awareness of specific aspects of conflict transformation and challenge entrenched stereotypes. Therefore, campaigns should address the following topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The interconnection between EU integration and peaceful conflict transformation¹ ○ Commemorating historical and symbolic dates with future-oriented narratives ○ Critical assessment of the existing stereotypical views within Georgian society about the historical origins of Abkhazians and Ossetians • Solidarity campaigns should emphasize the exclusion of women, youth, internally displaced persons (IDPs), veterans, and various social groups from the peace process, as well as the necessity of their involvement. For instance, showcasing stories of women's participation in reconciliation efforts, highlighting women's peace initiatives, and addressing gender-specific challenges in conflict transformation could be impactful.
1.5 Prepare a series of academic and applied research relevant to conflict transformation and integration into curricula	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universities • Research centers • Contemporary historians • Civil society organizations working on conflict issues • International/donor organizations • Georgian government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing academic research about conflicts in Georgia for an in-depth analysis of their history including recent past. • Applied research should be conducted on various thematic areas relevant to confidence-building, reconciliation, human rights, international law, and Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-Ossetian relations. For example, studies could focus on women's experiences in peacebuilding and the benefits of their increased participation. • It is important for Georgia to develop academic program about Russian studies. According to the 2024 CRRC quantitative study, the party primarily responsible for the military confrontations of the 1990s and 2008 is identified as the Russian Federation. Additionally, the majority of respondents believe that Russia has the greatest influence on the prospects for resolving Georgia's conflicts. Therefore, it is essential to develop the discipline of Russian studies in Georgia from both academic and applied research perspectives.
2. Objective: Promote greater involvement of political parties in the conflict transformation process		
Activities to be implemented	Responsible actors	Clarification/comments, possible concrete steps
2.1 Integrating conflict transformation messages into political party programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political parties • Civil society organizations working on conflict issues • International/donor organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These messages could be based on the joint conceptual expert document (2024) by Caucasian House, the Institute for the study of Nationalism and Conflicts, and the Levan Mikeladze Foundation on the transformation of the Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-Ossetian conflicts. • To monitor the implementation of party programs and the Charter/Memorandum, as well as to analyze ongoing and strategic processes, it is advisable to hold an annual conference on conflict and security issues. • This initiative could be modeled after the annual conference of the UN Mission in Georgia and its expanded format. • This could serve as an important positive message to the Abkhazian and Ossetian communities, as well as international partners.
2.2 Organize an annual conference on peace and security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political parties • Civil society organizations and experts working on peace and conflict issues • Security experts • International/donor organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In order to monitor the implementation of party programs and charters/memorandums, as well as to analyze current and strategic processes, it is desirable to hold an annual conference on conflicts and security issues. • Such an initiative could be based on the annual conference of the UN in Georgia and its expanded format.
3. Objective: Promote direct interactions between conflict-divided societies		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical connectivity between the people and their free movement are key indicators of peaceful transformation of conflicts, which, in this context, have two dimensions. For Tbilisi, free movement means unhindered passage across the dividing line, while for Sokhumi and Tskhinvali, it relates to unrestricted travel to Western countries. • According to the 2024 CRRC quantitative survey, only 17% of respondents know at least one person currently living in Abkhazia, and 13% in the Tskhinvali region, excluding regions populated by ethnic Georgians. This indicates a minimal connection between communities, highlighting a concerning level of alienation. • The same survey shows that 51% of respondents believe that the prospects for reconciliation between Georgians and Abkhazians, and Georgians and Ossetians, are diminishing over time. Therefore, the majority of the population shares the view that time is not working in favor of reconciliation.

¹ According to the 2024 CRRC quantitative survey, 61% of respondents believe that integration into the European Union will have a positive impact on the conflict transformation process.

Activities to be implemented	Responsible actors	Clarification/comments, possible concrete steps
3.1 Promote free movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government of Georgia Civil society organizations working on conflict issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using the conditionality principle, free movement across the dividing line could be restored in exchange for Abkhazians' and Ossetians' ability to travel abroad. The right to free movement should apply both to residents of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia (regarding their travel abroad) and to residents of the rest of Georgia (regarding their right to enter and exit Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia). The process of obtaining a Georgian passport for Abkhazians and Ossetians could be simplified, or a new status-neutral document could be introduced, recognized by the EU and eligible for visa liberalization, making it an attractive option. This will give the document practical significance for the residents of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia.
3.2 Simplify rules and regulations for the movement of vehicles with de facto Abkhazian license Plates in the rest of the Georgian territory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government of Georgia 	
4. Objective: Incorporate conflict transformation approaches in state policy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to the 2024 CRRC quantitative survey, the largest share of respondents (38%) believe that the primary actor in conflict resolution on the Georgian side is the Georgian government. The survey also indicates that 24% of respondents believe that conflict-related efforts should not be the responsibility of a single state agency but rather a collective effort across all agencies.
Activities to be implemented	Responsible actors	Clarification/comments, possible concrete steps
4.1 Update and create strategic state documents on conflicts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government of Georgia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The state strategy for the occupied territories, <i>Engagement through Cooperation</i>, and its corresponding action plan have not been updated since their approval in 2010. Consequently, they do not reflect the realities that have emerged over the past 15 years. In this process, it is desirable to place more emphasis on a transformational approach. It is important to expand and diversify the peace initiative <i>Step to a Better Future</i> and to raise public awareness about it. According to the 2024 CRRC quantitative survey, only 30% of respondents report being well (1%) or somewhat (29%) familiar with the socio-economic programs or peace initiatives created by the Georgian government for the well-being of people living in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region. The Georgian government needs to develop a clear vision for de-occupation. Since 2008, there has been no broad public discussion regarding the parameters and indicators of de-occupation. For instance, does de-occupation only mean the complete withdrawal of the Russian Federation's troops? Does the mere presence of troops determine Russia's effective control on the ground? Would a transitional period with international security guarantees be necessary? How do de-occupation and reconciliation intersect? These and other critical questions remain unanswered in political and public discourse. It is essential to establish a state anti-annexation strategy. There has been a moment in the history of the conflict when the interests of Sokhumi and Tbilisi aligned—namely, preventing annexation of Abkhazia from Russia. Undoubtedly Sokhumi and Tbilisi may have different ultimate goals (Sokhumi seeks recognition of independence, whereas Tbilisi aims to restore territorial integrity), they currently share a common challenge: the threat of annexation. Addressing this shared concern could contribute to conflict transformation without addressing political and status-related issues.
4.2 Harmonize relevant normative base with the conflict transformation policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parliament of Georgia Civil society organizations working on conflict issues International/donor organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is crucial that the legislative framework support conflict transformation. A thorough analysis of existing legislation should be conducted, followed by the preparation of specific legislative initiatives. One key initiative would be amending the Law of Georgia <i>On Occupied Territories</i> to decriminalize, under exceptional circumstances, the movement of residents of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region who simultaneously hold Russian Federation and local de facto passports, provided their entry into the occupied territories is recorded from an alternative location, excluding the Zugdidi and Gori municipalities.
4.3 Enhance the political status of the State Minister for Reconciliation and Civil Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government of Georgia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The political mandate of the State Minister for Reconciliation and Civil Equality should be enhanced. Among other measures, the State Minister should become a permanent member of the National Security Council.
5. Objective: Initiate discussions on the need for and possible formats of direct dialogue between Tbilisi and Sokhumi, and Tbilisi and Tskhinvali		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to the 2024 CRRC quantitative survey, 84% of respondents believe that the Georgian government should engage in direct dialogue with the de facto authorities of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia.

Activities to be implemented	Responsible actors	Clarification/comments, possible concrete steps
5.1 Identify possible formats for direct dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Georgian government • Civil society organizations working on conflict issues • Political parties • International/donor organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person involved in the negotiations may be granted the status of the Prime Minister's Special Representative in the dialogue with Sokhumi and Tskhinvali for flexibility. • Drawing from other conflict resolution examples, technical committees could be established, to create a venue or platform for parties discuss opportunities for cooperation on less politically sensitive thematic issues. These committees could include representatives from relevant government ministries. • According to the 2024 CRRC quantitative study, the following topics should be prioritized for direct dialogue: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Free movement between Abkhazia, South Ossetia/Tskhinvali region, and the rest of Georgia (46%) ○ Safe return of IDPs to the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia/Tskhinvali region (32%) ○ Trade and economic relations with Abkhazia and South Ossetia/Tskhinvali region (28%) ○ Education of young people living in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region (17%) ○ Healthcare for the population living in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region (10%) ○ Compensation for the property of IDPs (10%) • Additional areas of common interest may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Protection of cultural heritage ○ Environmental protection ○ Combating organized crime ○ Management of crisis situations
5.2 Initiate consultations with conflict-affected groups on the direct dialogue initiatives for their engagement in the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Georgian government • Civil society organizations working on conflict issues • IDP organizations • Political parties • Donor organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with IDPs, veterans, and family members of missing persons on the need for direct dialogue. Involving conflict-affected individuals and considering their interests would enhance the legitimacy of the direct dialogue initiative. • Develop targeted initiatives to strengthen and increase women's participation in peace processes and dialogue.
5.3 Analyze possible legal, domestic, and foreign policy risks related to direct dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil society organizations working on conflict issues • International law specialists • Political parties • Donor organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish an expert working group to analyze the limitations of existing formats (GID and IPRM) and assess the legal and political risks associated with launching a new direct dialogue format. Commonly cited risks include the potential legitimization of de facto authorities and harm to the policy of non-recognition and etc. • According to the CRRC 2024 quantitative survey, 69% of respondents believe that Russian policy is the main obstacle to initiating direct dialogue. Accordingly, it is crucial to conduct a realistic assessment of the potential and format of such a dialogue. • Initiate consultations with Georgia's Western partners to evaluate the feasibility and risks of direct dialogue.