

I now give the floor to the representative of Georgia.

**Mr. Tsiskarashvili** (Georgia): At the outset, on behalf of my delegation, I wish to express my gratitude to the Austrian presidency of the Security Council for this opportunity to address an issue that, unfortunately, reflects problems in many parts of the world. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the statement by the Secretary-General on this subject.

While Georgia has aligned itself with the statement made by the Swedish representative on behalf of the presidency of the European Union, I would like to take this opportunity to stress some additional points.

The recent developments in my country confirm that when a State is in constant breach of norms of international humanitarian law and voluntarily accepted international commitments, the result is human suffering and ethnic cleansing.

Five months ago, we all had an opportunity to address this matter at an open debate here in this Chamber (see S/PV.6151 (Resumption 1)). At that time, my delegation provided the Council with detailed information on civilians living under foreign occupation in two regions of my country, Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region of South Ossetia. We also offered a rationale for the actions of one permanent member of Council, which consecutively vetoed the presence of two international monitoring missions in Georgia. Unbiased and qualified international monitors would have provided a clear assessment of the situation on the ground. Once again, the veto of one permanent member led to the failure to create an objective source of information for the international community.

Since our statement five months ago, nothing has changed. Ethnicity-based violations and other gross and massive violations of human rights law and humanitarian law happen on a daily basis. During the past several days alone, four Georgian teenagers, aged 14 to 16, were kidnapped from a village located near the occupation line and charged with terrorist activity. Earlier today, in addition, five citizens who happened to be fishing in Georgian territorial waters controlled by the central Government were kidnapped on charges of so-called illegal fishing and are being held in custody. Only a couple of days ago, 16 men were released after being arrested for simply cutting down trees in a forest that is, again, close to the occupation line.

These deplorable provocations coincided with the eighth round of talks in Geneva, where the European Union, the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe are trying to facilitate a dialogue between the parties to achieve a peaceful solution of the problem. The previous rounds in Geneva showed nothing but the unwillingness of our northern neighbour to engage itself in a substantive dialogue.

I would like to draw the Council's attention to the problem of humanitarian access to civilians in need of assistance. In the Tskhinvali region of South Ossetia, the occupying forces continue to block access for humanitarian aid and international humanitarian actors, which obliges missions to enter the Tskhinvali region exclusively from the territory of the Russian Federation. This policy represents yet another breach of the principles of international humanitarian law, as well as of paragraph 3 of the European Union-brokered ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008.

Notwithstanding the protests of numerous international organizations against this discriminatory policy, the policy persists. The blockade turns the territory into a black hole, where people are deprived of their basic rights and where humanitarian aid is simply not allowed. The continuation of the current state of affairs cannot be tolerated by the international community.

In conclusion, let me assure the Council that my country stands ready to work with the international community in order to ensure that real progress in protection of civilians becomes a reality.