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**Statement by H.E. Mr. Alexander Maisuradze**

 **Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Georgia**

**Thirty-seventh session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group**

**26 January 2021**

Thank you Madam President,

Esteemed members of the Troika,

Distinguished delegates and civil society representatives,

Let me use this opportunity to congratulate you, Madam President (Nazhat Shameem Khan) on your election as the HRC President and reassure you of Georgia’s full support, as well as our commitment to be actively engaged in the work of the Council.

It is my honor to address you at the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review. We are pleased to participate in the UPR process, which we consider to be an essential mechanism for the promotion and protection of human rights. Today I am joined virtually by the Georgian Delegation, which consists of the representatives of all relevant Government institutions. We are looking forward to discuss with you today the major developments in the country since the last review and receive recommendations for further upholding human rights and addressing existing challenges.

Madam President, Georgia’s review is conducted just few days after the European Court of Human Rights adopted a historic judgement against Russia. On 21st of January, The European Court established that Russia had violated a number of articles of the European Convention on Human Rights during the August 2008 war. The Court ruled that Russia was responsible for the mass violations committed against the Georgian population, as it exercised effective control over the Tskhinvali region and Abkhazia. Importantly, the Court confirmed that the Tskhinvali region and Abkhazia are integral parts of Georgia’s territory and are occupied by Russia.

Without any further delay, I would like to invite the Head of Delegation H.E. Khatuna Totladze, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, for her opening remarks.