



## Conscience and Peace Tax International

Internacional de Conciencia e Impuestos para la Paz

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN

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Item 6: Universal Periodic Review

ORAL STATEMENT BY CONSCIENCE AND PEACE TAX INTERNATIONAL  
Delivered by **Derek Brett**, Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2011

### ADOPTION OF UPR REPORT ON GEORGIA

Conscience and Peace Tax International (CPTI) welcomes the acceptance by Georgia of the recommendation that it should "Reduce the length of alternative service for conscientious objectors so that it is the same length as the military service"<sup>1</sup>

The latest information we have been able to obtain indicates that the duration of alternative service was reduced by executive decree is 24 months, as opposed to 18 months, possibly to be further reduced to 12 months, for military service. The 1997 Law on Alternative Service, which to the best of our knowledge still applies, states "the nature of the alternative non-military labour service must conform with the difficulties of the general military service".<sup>2</sup> With such a provision regarding the conditions of alternative service, there can be no excuse for its being of a longer duration than military service; any such difference must be discriminatory and punitive in nature.

We look forward to hearing of the specific legislative changes which will equalise the lengths of military and alternative service. We hope also that Georgia uses the opportunity to review its current alternative service provisions with a view to ensuring that conscientious objections may be declared at any time, including after the commencement of military service, that the alternative service is completely independent of the military and truly civilian in nature, and that the same applies to any linked reserve service obligations, and also that the former system of "buying out" of military service obligations is completely abolished, if this has not been done already.

<sup>1</sup> A/HRC/17/11, Para 105.63 (recommendation by Slovenia).

<sup>2</sup> (Chapter 1, Article 2), as quoted in Amnesty International, Concerns in Europe, January to July 1999, 1<sup>st</sup> August 1999, AI Index NO. EUR 01/002/99

CPTI welcomes the ratification by Georgia of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. There were however disturbing reports at the beginning of 2010<sup>3</sup> that, in response to the events of August 2008 obligatory military training, including weapons training, was to be added in the next academic year to the curriculum for senior secondary school classes, and later to be extended to other age groups. Such a move is contrary to the spirit of the optional protocol and is also incompatible with respect for conscientious objection to military service.

CPTI would encourage Georgia to reconsider this change, and indeed to reopen the consideration of the complete professionalisation of the armed forces which was interrupted by the events of August 2008.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Reuters, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2010, quoted by Child Rights Information Network, ([www.crin.org](http://www.crin.org)), [crinmail 1139](#)

<sup>4</sup> War Resisters International, [CO Update No.29](#), May 2007.