

PM Garibashvili delivers a speech at Brussels Forum, focusing on cooperation between NATO allies

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

On Monday, Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili participated as a Key-Note Speaker in Brussels Forum, which took place in parallel with the NATO June 14 summit. The Head of the Georgian Government delivered a speech during a panel named Investing in Resilience, which focuses on the importance of cooperation between NATO allies.

Garibashvili stated in his speech that since Georgia regained its independence in 1991, it has been subjected to economic, energy, and trade blockades, cyber-attacks, information warfare, and other types of non-conventional, as well as conventional warfares. He stated that in the conditions of Russia occupying 20 percent of Georgia's territories and using them as a testing ground for its destructive policies, the mentioned hostile actions continue to this day.

According to him, countries in the region, Europe, and beyond have faced new security threats and are looking for ways to protect themselves.

"Hence, it is crucial for like-minded states to join forces and share tools and experience to build the resilience, which has become a crucial concept not only in the military but much broader terms – the resilience of societies, founded on the shared principles of human rights, rule of law, good governance and market economy," PM Garibashvili underscored.

He mentioned in his speech that Strengthening Georgia's democratic institutions, boosting economic development, and pursuing modernization are among the important efforts that are being undertaken to make Georgia more resilient to external threats.



Strengthening Georgia's democratic institutions, boosting economic development, and pursuing modernization are some of the important endeavors that we pursue to be more resilient in the face of the external threats," PM of Georgia Giorgi Garibashvili stated.



Brussels Forum was held in parallel with the NATO summit on June 14.

According to the PM, the complex nature of modern hybrid warfare calls for joint effort and support from partners. As he noted, in this regard, it is important that the NATO Summit 2021 focuses on the 2030 Summit Agenda, which will become the basis of the new strategic concept of the Alliance. Garibashvili stressed that for many years NATO has been actively investing in Georgia. He expressed readiness to further strengthen the partnership with NATO in this direction.

"For aspirant Georgia, this agenda is all the more pertinent, as we prepare ourselves for the membership in the Alliance. Because the more resilient each

like-minded partner and each member is, the stronger NATO is. And this is the only way to prevail in the battle of systems of values for freedom and peace-loving nations," Garibashvili concluded.

The Brussels Forum was attended by NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg and other global leaders, including Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo, Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, and Slovakia's President Zuzana Caputova.

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State Ministers for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, OSCE SG, US Ambassador meet Zaza Gakheladze's family.

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

The OSCE Secretary General, Helga Maria Schmid, US Ambassador to Georgia Kelly Degnan, and the State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, Tea Akhvlediani arrived in the village of Tsitsagiaantkari yesterday near the Russian-controlled Tskhinvali region of Georgia, where they met with the family of Zaza Gakheladze, a Georgian citizen who was illegally sentenced to 12 years in prison by the de facto Supreme Court of the Russian-occupied Tskhinvali region on February 5.

Family members of Gakheladze were informed of the measures that are being taken to free him from illegal detention. According to the State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, this issue will be raised again within the framework of the 100th meeting of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) scheduled for today.

US Ambassador to Georgia stressed that Gakheladze's case is "a heartbreaking example of the role that Russia plays here in Georgia." Degnan affirmed America's unwavering support for Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty. According to her, Russia must fulfil the 2008 agreement, withdraw the troops and renounce the recognition of the so-called independence of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali.

Gakheladze's mother Nana Bunturi told the journalists that their only demand is his release. She stressed that his son's birthday is on June 23 and if



Georgian citizen Zaza Gakheladze was illegally detained by occupation forces in July 2020 and was sentenced to 12 years and six months in prison by the de facto Supreme Court of the Russian-occupied Tskhinvali region on February 5, 2021.



Gakheladze's mother Nana Bunturi has stated that if his son is not released, protests will kick off.

Gakheladze is not released by then, they would "either cross into the occupation line or will take other actions." According to Bunturi, if his son is not released, they will launch protests.

ON June 6-10, Toivo Klaar, the European Union Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia (EUSR) visited Tskhinvali and Sokhumi. During the meeting with Georgian Security Service Chief Grigol Liluashvili, the sides particularly underscored the urgency of releasing the illegally detained Georgian citizens Zaza Gakheladze, Lasha Khetereli, Genadi Bestaev, and Irakli Bebuia from custody. While discussing the situation along the occupation line, the parties stressed the need to increase the potential of the existing negotiation formats of Geneva International Discussions (GID) and Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM).

Gakheladze was shot and illegally detained by Russian-controlled occupation forces in July 2020. On February 5, 2021, he was sentenced to 12 years and six months in prison by the de facto Supreme Court of the Russian-occupied Tskhinvali region. The court found him guilty of "illegally crossing the border and attempted murder" of a so-called border guard.

Since February, the international community has been calling for the immediate release of Gakheladze and urging Russia to fulfill its obligation under the 2008 ceasefire agreement.

NEWS IN BRIEF

PREPARED BY THE MESSENGER STAFF

NATO reiterated that Georgia will join the alliance

"We reiterate the decision

Weather

Tuesday, June 15

Day Clear High: 31°C

Night Clear Low: 19°C

Wednesday, June 16

Day Clear High: 32°C

Night Clear Low: 19°C

made at the 2008 Bucharest Summit that Georgia will become a member of the Alliance," a recent communique on the Alliance Summit reads.

The North Atlantic Alliance communique states that the organization supports Georgia's free will. The document also states that NATO appreciates Georgia's contribution to maintaining Euro-Atlantic security.

The Alliance supports Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty. It also calls on Russia to fulfill its obligations under the August 2008 agreement.

The communique also mentions that Georgia should continue to implement reforms. At

the same time, the organization welcomes the conclusion of the agreement between the political parties and looks forward to its full implementation.

Newly appointed director of Ninotsminda boarding school refuses to meet the court's decision

The newly appointed director of the Ninotsminda boarding school, Metropolitan Jacob of Bodbe, says it is 'too early' to talk about the ombudsman en-

tering the facility.

According to the Metropolitan, he does not agree with the



court's decision regarding the immediate withdrawal of the children and intends to dispute this legally.

Ninotsminda Children's Boarding House will be headed by Reverend Jacob. The information

was confirmed by Father Andria Jagmaidze, the press secretary of the Patriarchate.

The decision to change the head of the Ninotsminda boarding house was made by Pa-

triarch Ilia II. Earlier, representatives of the Patriarchate arrived at the scene.

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43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi, 0108, Georgia Founded by Prof.

Zaza Gachechiladze Tamar Gachechiladze Publisher

Mob.: +995 599 565621; +995 577 760000 E-mail: messenger@messenger.com.ge http://www.messenger.com.ge/

Nino Metreveli Commercial Director

Mariam Mchedlidze Editor-in-Chief

Natalia Kochiashvili Executive Editor

Khatuna Gogichaishvili Layout Designer, Photographer

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Georgia's foreign trade in January-May 2021

EXTERNAL MERCHANDISE TRADE TENDENCIES OF GEORGIA
IN JANUARY-MAY 2016-2021

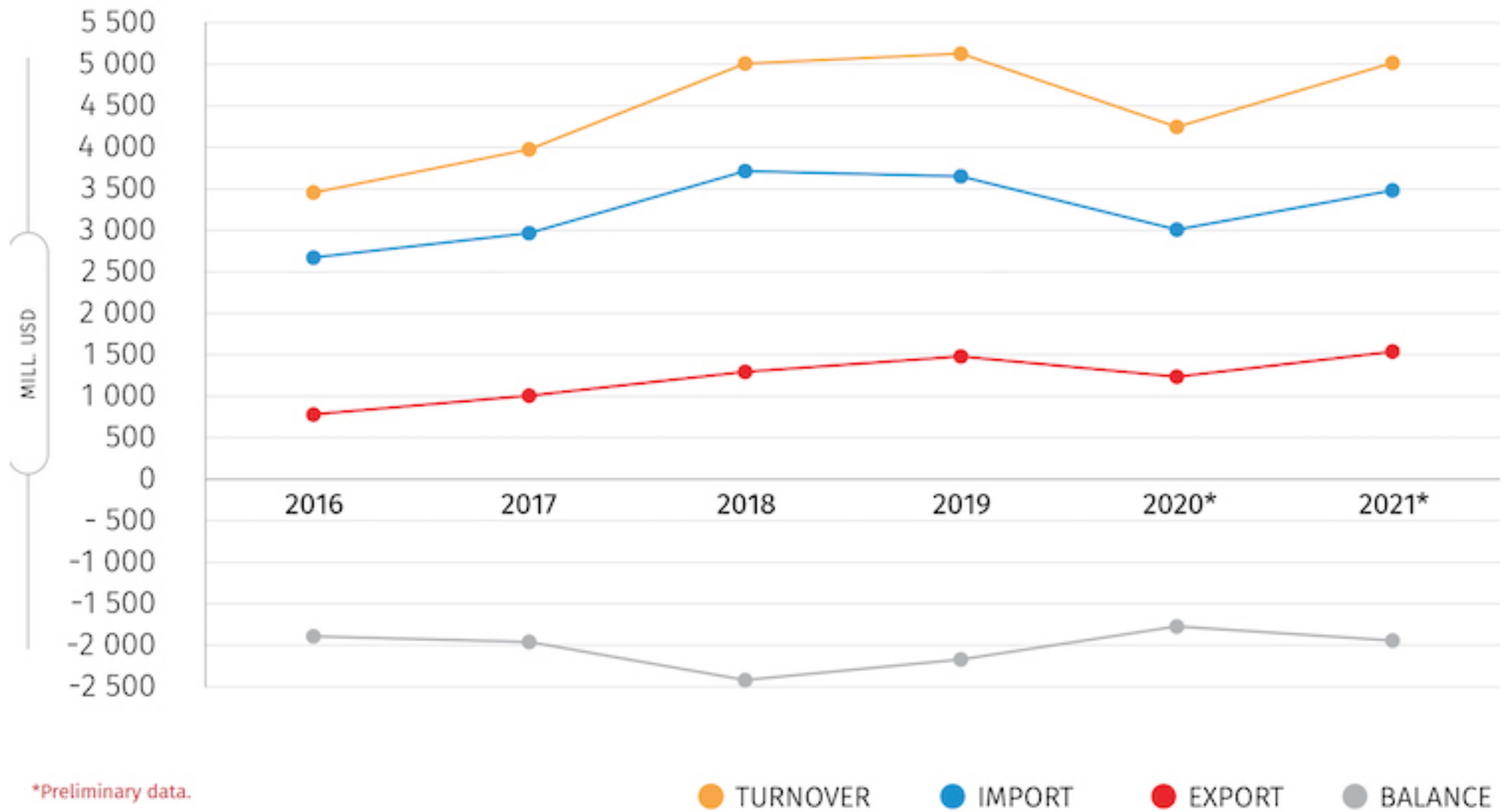


Photo: geostat

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The National Statistics Office (Geostat) released the preliminary data on June 14, according to which Georgia's foreign trade turnover in the first 5 months of 2021 was \$5.01 billion – an increase of 18.2% compared to the same period last year.

Exports increased by 24.4% year-on-year reaching \$1.53 billion, while imports increased by 15.7%, to \$3.48 billion. Meanwhile, in express data the trade deficit in January-May 2021 amounted to \$1.94 million which is 38.7% of total trade turnover.

Geostat also published the statistics for local visitors - in the first quarter of 2021, the average monthly number of local visitors aged 15 and older in Georgia was set at 1,094.4 thousand, who made 1,234.6 thousand visits to the country.

According to them, the number of visitors during this period is 23.4% higher than the corresponding data for the first quarter of 2020.

In the first quarter of the current year, the average monthly number of tourist-type visits made by resident visitors to Georgia was set at 554 000, which is 28.8 % higher than the indicator of the same period last year. "In the first quarter of 2021, people aged 31-50 were amongst the most avid domestic travelers (39%). 50.9% of visits were made by women," says Geostat.

According to the Geostat survey, 42.7% of visitors are residents of Tbilisi, 12.3% come from the Kvemo Kartli region, 10.9% from the Imereti, Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti regions,

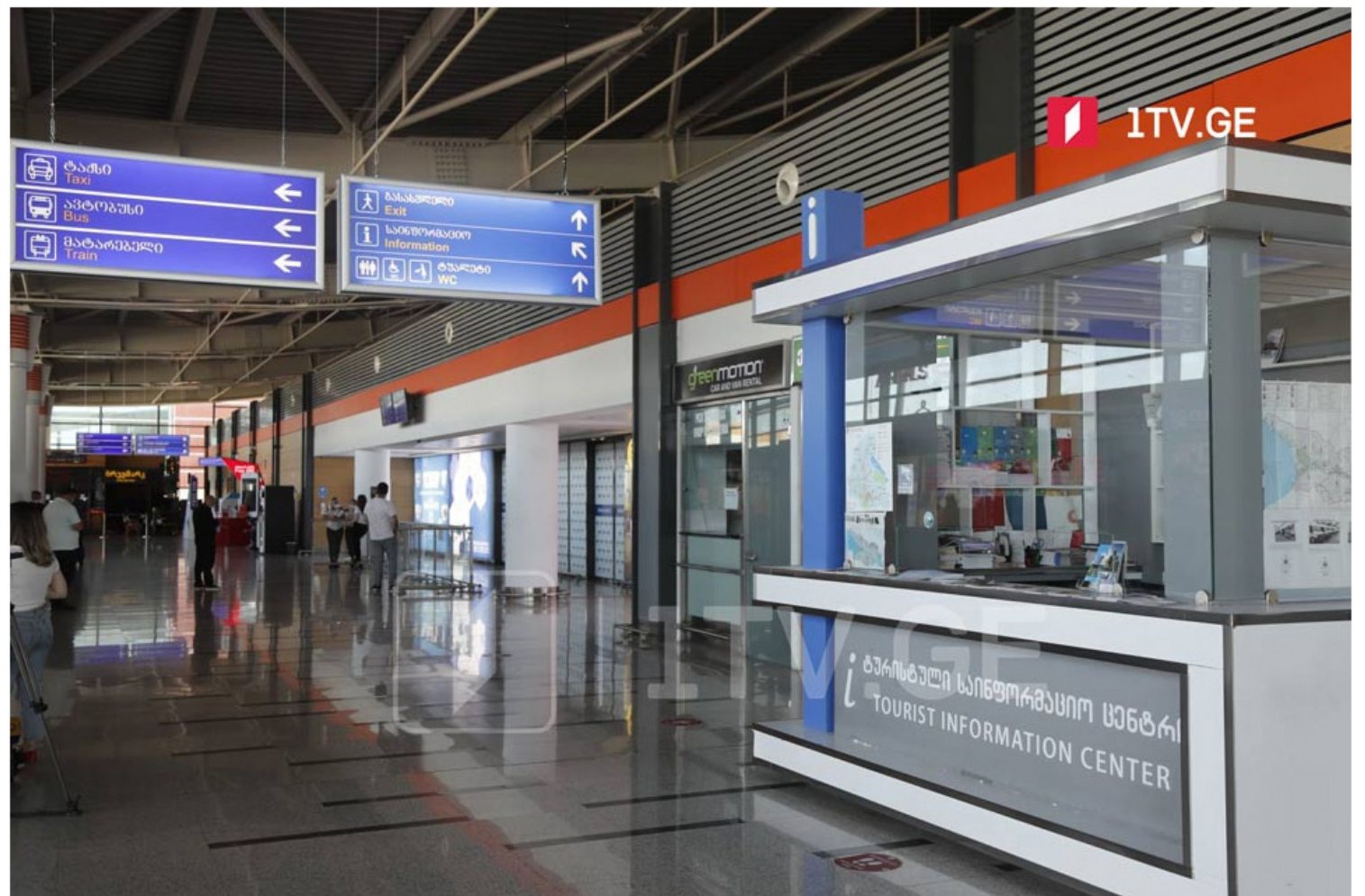
and the rest of the regions have a relatively low share in the structure.

As for the purpose of the visits, the 47.1%, was for visiting friends / relatives. Most visits were made to Georgian capi-

tal city of Tbilisi (average 262 000 visits per month) and the Imereti region (av. 210 000).

According to Geostat, the average monthly expenses during the visits in the

first quarter of 2021 was set at ₾ 184.2 million. This figure is 44.9% higher than the corresponding period last year. The average cost of the visit increased by 22% and amounted to ₾ 149.2.



Number of domestic visitors is up 23.4% in Georgia. Photo: 1tv.ge