

Prime Minister Reaffirms Georgia’s Commitment to Lead-Free Future in Panel Discussion

By Liza Mchedlidze

At the invitation of USAID Administrator Samantha Power, the Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Gharibashvili participated in a panel discussion titled “Towards a Lead-Free Future”. The discussion took place within the Davos Economic Forum.

During his address, Gharibashvili underscored the critical challenge of lead poisoning for the global public health system. He highlighted that, according to surveys conducted in 2018 by UNICEF with support from the USA, 41% of children aged two to seven had blood lead levels exceeding acceptable thresholds. In response, the Georgian government promptly implemented measures to mitigate and prevent lead poisoning. The national response package, initiated in 2019 with support from UNICEF and USAID, featured a comprehensive awareness campaign.

“In order to identify the sources of exposure, we have started the assessment of environmental conditions within the same program. These interventions resulted in speed improvements indicating the effectiveness of the response package. And in the fourth year of the lead response program implementation, we have observed a remarkable, 75% decrease in the prevalence of blood lead levels among children in the region. In order to sustain these achievements, Georgia has bolstered the regulatory framework, considering the lead-containing products aligned with EU Association Agreements. Since July 2023, we have implemented a string of technical regulations, controlling the manufacturer, sale, and import of construction paints.

Legal limits have been set to govern the production, sale, and input of paint with higher lead concentrations. Additionally, to address potential risks, Georgia has enhanced its regulatory framework concerning lead migration in toys. Relevant regulation in force since 2021 focuses on ensuring the safety of toys, incorporating legal limits to govern the production, sale, and import of toys with high lead migration. We are also actively



working on establishing government regulations to ensure the safety of these products, aligning with EU legislation and following the WHO recommendations. In order to improve the ambient air quality monitoring in the country, we have started continuous 24/7 sampling and analysis of heavy metals, including the content of lead in major cities. The current results show that ambient air pollution may not be considered as a source of lead exposure,” Gharibashvili stated.

The Prime Minister expressed Georgia’s gratitude for significant support from international entities, partners, and friends, such as USAID, UNICEF, WHO, Germany, and the Arctic University of Norway. Additionally, he emphasized that Georgia actively participates in the European environment and health pro-

cess, demonstrating the country’s commitment.

“Georgia has been fortunate to receive substantial support from international entities, partners, and friends, such as USAID, UNICEF, WHO, Germany, and the Arctic University of Norway. This support is directed towards strengthening chemical by monitoring, building laboratory capacity, establishing surveillance models, developing communication campaigns, and training human resources. Importantly, our active involvement in the European environment and health process showcases our commitment.

Georgia is steadfast in his commitment to strengthening both human and technical capacities. We aim to further develop our lab surveillance systems, con-

duct thorough research on sources of lead poisoning, implement effective mitigation strategies, and contribute progressively to the reduction of the burden and lead exposure.

To conclude, the World Economic Forum provides us with a unique opportunity to reinforce and elevate our collective political commitment to a shared vision – a world free of lead poisoning; adopting rigorous monitoring, strict regulations, and fostering international collaboration is Georgia’s commitment to address lead poisoning comprehensively. And I believe that in the united global community, we can achieve greater results, ensuring a healthier and more prosperous future for generations worldwide,” Gharibashvili said.



Prime Minister Gharibashvili Meets with EBRD President Odile Renaud-Basso

By Liza Mchedlidze

Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Gharibashvili, met with Odile Renaud-Basso, the President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

The meeting, held at the World Economic Forum in Davos, focused on reviewing the successful cooperation between Georgia and EBRD. The discus-

sions encompassed projects supported by the EBRD in both the public and private sectors.

Gharibashvili expressed gratitude to the President of EBRD for their support, highlighting that the bank’s assistance in financing strategic initiatives enables the implementation of crucial reforms.

Attention was focused on the

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.6573; Euro - 2.8911; GBP - 3.3704; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.0076; Swiss Franc - 3.0842

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historic decision to grant Georgia the status of a candidate country for EU membership. The Prime Minister spoke about the progress achieved by Georgia on the path of European integration and future plans.

Irakli Gharibashvili updated the president of EBRD on the current positive trends in Georgia's economy. Despite the

challenging regional and global situations, he emphasized that Georgia continues to show consistently growing economic indicators. The government's effective policies have resulted in double-digit economic growth over the last two years.

The meeting also emphasized significant infrastructure projects actively pursued by the government's economic team. During the discussion, Irakli

Gharibashvili and Odile Renaud-Basso explored new avenues of cooperation and outlined prospects for future collaboration.

The Prime Minister noted that the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development has a diversified portfolio in Georgia, totaling approximately 5 billion euros across 289 projects. Gharibashvili expressed gratitude to Odile Renaud-Basso for their fruitful cooperation.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

US Anti-Corruption Coordinator Richard Nephew Meets with Georgia's NGOs



Richard Nephew, the United States Coordinator on Global Anti-Corruption, held a meeting with representatives from non-governmental organizations operating in Georgia.

Nephew will also meet with representatives from the government, the anti-corruption bu-

reau, and investigative agencies

in Georgia.

According to representatives from the civil sector, it is crucial that a high-ranking official from the State Department first meets with them and listens to the information directly from their perspective. NGOs discussed both the Gharibashvili charter and the operations of major Chinese companies in Georgia with Richard Nephew.

"Today, a new component is introduced in the form of Chinese companies, which pose serious risks to the country's security. Therefore, when we talk about corruption in Georgia, it is no longer just a matter of give and take, which is inherently bad. Instead, it remains at a low level — the issues being discussed today refer to strategic corruption that will affect the country's security.

Yesterday, I mentioned that the government of Georgia gave us a wonderful gift with SinoHydro. We can communicate this directly to him and conclude the conversation, as it highlights how things can go wrong with just one wrong decision," said Khidasheli, the chairperson of Civil Idea.

Foreign Minister Iliia Darchiashvili Meets with Iranian Counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian



The meeting emphasized the good neighborly relations established over the years between Georgia and Iran.

The ministers reviewed issues related to bilateral relations, in-

cluding trade and economic ties between the countries, the positive potential of enhancing people-to-people contacts, and cooperation in the fields of culture, education, and tourism.

The conversation also touched on the situation and challenges in the region, with a particular focus on the need for sustainable and stable development.

EU4Energy announces 2024 work programme to advance energy governance in Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine

The EU4Energy initiative has announced its 2024 Work Programme, with a comprehensive plan to advance energy sector governance, development and sustainability in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

In 2024, EU4Energy will provide continuous support to Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine in areas such as renewable energy, gas market development, and energy efficiency, crucial for re-



ducing carbon footprints and fostering environmentally responsible energy practices.

EU4Energy will also focus on capacity building for ministries, regulators, transmission system operators (TSOs), and other

stakeholders in all three EU candidate countries.

The programme will actively support the implementation of the Electricity Integration Package, with a focus on the post-

synchronisation process in Moldova and Ukraine. Integration into regional electricity networks enhances energy security and resilience.

In addition to the common priorities, EU4Energy's 2024

Work Programme tailors its support to specific needs in each partner country.

In Georgia, the focus will be on supporting the Georgian State Electrosystem (GSE) and the Georgian National Energy and Water Regulatory Commission (GNERC) in drafting the Residual Mix Calculation Methodology and disclosure rules of Guarantees of Origin.

In Moldova, special attention will be given to the implementation of Law 10/2016, which promotes the use of energy from renewable sources. EU4Energy will particularly concentrate on the development of relevant secondary legal acts to facilitate the

transition to sustainable energy.

In Ukraine, the initiative will maintain a spotlight on Ukraine Support Activities, specifically supporting the management of the Energy Community Secretariat's established Fiduciary account for the Ukraine Energy Support Fund.

Funded by the European Union, the EU4Energy initiative aims to achieve the clean energy transition, increase energy security in three Eastern partner countries (Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) and facilitate access to energy to the distressed population in Ukraine to mitigate the impact of the war.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Thursday, January 18

Day Mostly Cloudy
High: 9°C

Night Mostly Cloudy
Low: 4°C

Friday, January 19

Day Mostly Cloudy
High: 10°C

Night Mostly Cloudy
Low: 2°C

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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

Khatuna Gogichaishvili

Layout Designer, Photographer

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