

## President Zourabichvili's Remarks on China's Activity in Georgia and the Need for Western Involvement in Infrastructure Projects

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

During a discussion at Chatham House, the President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili, remarked on China's increasing activity in Georgia, expressing uncertainty about the implications of the 'strategic partnership'. She stated, "Now we are in a 'strategic partnership', don't know what that means, don't ask me."

Zourabichvili also noted that China is heavily involved in infrastructural projects. Consequently, Georgia requires increased involvement in large-scale infrastructural projects from its western partners.

Salome Zourabichvili also addressed the Anaklia port project, emphasizing its essential significance. She highlighted that the security of the Black Sea impacts everyone globally.

"China is becoming more active in Georgia. This has happened in the last few years, but it has become more and more active. Now we are in a 'strategic partnership'; I don't know what that means, so don't ask me. We also got a visa-free regime with China yesterday.

In addition, China is active in many infrastructure projects in



Georgia because it is cheap, does not respect many laws and labor rights, but this is also because our western partners are less involved. Perhaps we need more in-

volvement from Western partners in large infrastructure projects.

One of them is very important, and it is an issue that I have not yet touched upon - the

port of Anaklia. It is of essential importance since the security of the Black Sea is an issue that will probably concern us all in the future. Georgia's coast on the

Black Sea is of essential importance so that Russia does not have exclusivity on Black Sea cooperation, trade, etc," Zourabichvili stated.

## Papuashvili Accuses Opposition Parties of Establishing Scheme with Fake NGOs for Illegal Foreign Donations

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The Chairman of the Parliament, Shalva Papuashvili, accused opposition parties of receiving illegal donations from abroad, stating that receiving funding from abroad in an election year is equivalent to interfering in the elections.

Papuashvili stated that opposition parties in Georgia have set up a scheme involving fake NGOs to receive illegal donations, with a significant portion of the opposition being directly financed from abroad. He emphasized that foreign interference, whether from Russia, the European Union, or the USA, undermines the election process in Georgia. Papuashvili called on donors involved in hidden schemes, citing the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) as an example, and urged the European Union and the

European Commission to intervene to ensure fair elections. He stressed that stopping direct financing of parties from European channels is crucial to prevent election interference.

"Opposition parties have created a scheme through fake NGOs to receive illegal donations. Besides, in addition to these illegal donations, we are talking about financing from abroad. In fact, what we are observing, as it turns out, is that a large part of the opposition is directly financed from abroad. Taking into account that it is an election year, this is equivalent to foreign interference in the elections.

Foreign interference is one of the expected threats in these elections, primarily originating from Russia. However, I want to emphasize that regardless of where the intervention occurs - whether from within Russia, the European Union, or the USA - any interference constitutes meddling in the election process of the Georgian people and mirrors Russian tactics.

Once again, I call on donors who are involved in a hidden



Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.6606; Euro - 2.8780; GBP - 3.3646; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.9008; Swiss Franc - 3.0244

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

# Papuashvili Accuses Opposition Parties of Establishing Scheme with Fake NGOs for Illegal Foreign Donations

scheme and hide their funding, such as - I will name one - the European Endowment for Democracy (EED), which has its expenses covered but does not disclose, neither to the Georgian public nor to the citizens of the European Union. It seems that it directly finances the parties and interferes in the elections.

As you know, the proper conduct of elections is one of the

components of the 9 priorities, and here we cannot deal with the problem alone. The European Union, the European Commission should intervene here, since the EED is an institution estab-

lished by the European Union, in whose governance representatives of the European Parliament are strongly represented, including those directly connected to the National Assembly.

The European Union should also intervene if our common desire is to have fair and honest elections. Direct financing of parties in Georgia from European channels should be prohibited and

stopped. This is the responsibility of the European Union. If this is not stopped and the funding continues, it will harm the elections and there will be interference," Papuashvili stated.

## The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

### President Salome Zourabichvili Discusses Russia's Influence and Pro-Russian Groups in Georgia



In an interview with Sky News, the President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili, addressed the question regarding Russia's ongoing influence on the country, stating that there are pro-Russian groups in Georgia that do not openly declare their affiliations.

The President expressed her concerns about the ongoing occupation of 20% of

the country's territories and the upcoming significant parliamentary elections scheduled for October in Georgia.

"We know from the experiences of many other countries, much stronger than ours, how Russia can interfere in elections and start a hybrid war. We are

experiencing this personally - cyber attacks, possible use of economic pressure, propaganda, and financing of marginal groups. In Georgia, pro-Russian groups are really marginal, because we have occupied territories and we remember them," Zourabichvili said.

According to the President, under the conditions of occupation, "it is quite diffi-

cult to imagine such a society to have pro-Russian groups and parties."

But there are pro-Russian groups that don't openly declare their affiliations; funding flows in to support these groups and certain forms of anti-Western propaganda. We see in Georgia what we see elsewhere, and I am sure we will see even more this year, so we have to be very careful," Zourabichvili said.

### Russian Occupiers Unlawfully Detain Georgian Citizen in Occupied Territory



სახელმწიფო უსაფრთხოების სამსახური / State Security Service Of Georgia  
46K likes • 55K followers

The Russian occupiers have unlawfully detained a Georgian citizen within the occupied territory near the village of

Takhisdziri in the Kareli municipality.

As mentioned in the statement by the State Security Service, upon receiving information about the incident, the Service activated the 'hotline' operated by the EU Monitoring Mission.

"The information regarding another case of illegal detention was promptly reported to the co-chairs of the international discussions in Geneva and our international partners. All existing mechanisms for the release of illegally detained Georgian citizens have been activated.

The occupying power bears responsibility for all destructive actions commit-

ted in the occupied territories of Georgia, as well as along the occupation line," the statement reads.

### Ursula von der Leyen proposes using frozen Russian assets to purchase military equipment for Ukraine

Speaking in the European Parliament today, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen proposed to start using frozen Russian funds for military support to Ukraine.

"I would like us to think bigger. It is time to start a conver-



sation about using the windfall profits of frozen Russian assets to jointly purchase military equipment for Ukraine," von der Leyen said. "There could be no stronger symbol and no greater use for that money than to make Ukraine and all of Europe a safer place to live."

She also announced the EU would set up an Office for Defence Innovation in Kyiv.

"This will bring Ukraine ever closer to Europe and it will enable all Member States to draw on Ukraine's battlefield experience and expertise in industrial defence innovation," von der Leyen added.

The European Commission President added it was time for Europe to step up on defence: "We simply do not have the time to skirt around the issue. With or without the support of our partners, we cannot let Russia win. And the cost of insecurity - the cost of a Russian victory - is far greater than any saving we could make now."

(euneighbourseast.eu)

## Weather

Thursday, February 29

Day ☀️ Clear  
High: 8°C

Night 🌙 Clear  
Low: -2°C

Friday, March 1

Day ☀️ Clear  
High: 9°C

Night 🌙 Clear  
Low: -2°C

published by  
**The Messenger**

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

**The Messenger** welcomes your contributions. If you are interested in submitting an article or news item please contact. All contributions should be submitted by e-mail.

**The Messenger** Georgia's English language daily is an independent newspaper, and,

therefore, the opinions expressed in some articles do not necessarily coincide with those of the newspaper. We take no responsibility for any claims made in advertisements.

**The Messenger** preserves the style of a source written in English where possible.

# Georgia & Italy Together For Better Food Production

The Italian Foreign Trade Promotion Agency (ICE-ITA), with the participation of the Italian Embassy in Georgia, the Italian association Assofoodtec/ANIMA Confindustria and FederUNACOMA, organized in cooperation with the Georgian Employers Association (GEA) the event “Georgia and Italy together for better food production”. The event was dedicated to the following topics: Strengthening trade and economic ties, exchanging ideas and experience in

the field of agriculture and food industry, promoting Italian innovation and establishing new business ties.

The event was opened by Italian Ambassador to Georgia H.E. Massimiliano D’Antuono, High Commissioner, Director of ITA-Italian Trade Agency – Georgia & Azerbaijan Andrea Maccanico and Elguja Meladze, President of GEA - Georgian Employers’ Association. The event was attended by representatives of Georgian state agencies, international finan-

cial institutions (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and Asian Development Bank) and local companies working in the fields of agriculture and food industry.

Italy, which actively cooperates with Georgia in these fields, was represented at the event by the largest Italian companies that produce agricultural and forestry machinery, garden equipment and devices, necessary for the production of dairy products and sweets, as well as

high-tech packaging equipment for the food production.

The event included presentations and meetings of Georgian and Italian business associations in the “B2B” format.

The event was held on February 28, before the start of the event, a press conference was held with the participation of Italian Ambassador Massimiliano D’Antuono, Director of ITA Georgian Representation Andrea Maccanico and GEA President Elguja Meladze.







