

Representatives of Georgian Opposition Parties Leave for Ukraine



tary where they are. It depends on the security and logistics issues of Ukraine. We do not want to bother too much, but if we can, then we will go to that line as well," Khoshtaria said.

According to "Strategy Builder", Giorgi Vashadze is already in Ukraine.

"United National Movement" will fly from Tbilisi on February 3. Khatia Dekanoidze, chairwoman of the UNM said that despite their wish, the visit of the Parliamentary Friendship Group to Ukraine has not been possible so far. According to her, if there is a coincidence of time, they will gladly hold joint meetings with their counterparts in Kyiv.

It is known that after the adoption of the resolution in support of Ukraine without mentioning Russia, the opposition is preparing a joint statement with Ukraine. According to Dekanoidze, the text explains the reasons why the opposition did not support this resolution.

Recall that the Georgian Parliament passed the Georgian Dream-sponsored motion in support of Ukraine with 74 votes in favor and 33 abstentions, but without naming the Russian Federation.

MPs from the ruling party pushed through the resolution, ignoring pleas from the opposition to postpone the vote and amend the language to explicitly label Russia as a perpetrator and aggressor in the Ukraine situation. Almost all opposition lawmakers in attendance abstained from voting except for the ones from the Citizens and European Socialists, who chose to back the document.

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Members of "Lelo", "Droa" and "National Movement" are leaving for Ukraine. Although all three opposition parties are traveling to Ukraine separately and this is not their joint visit, they may hold joint meetings in Kyiv.

According to the opposition representatives, against the background of the prominent position of the Georgian authorities towards Ukraine, their visit and expression of support on the ground are especially important.

The Lelo delegation departed from Tbilisi airport yesterday, where the new political secretary of the party, Salome Samadashvili, told the media that it is important to show solidarity with the Ukrainian people and politicians against the background of the resolution adopted by the parliament.

"Today, the future of our country's freedom is largely determined by what happens in Ukraine, so it is important for us not only to show solidarity but also to draw up a joint action plan in several areas. In particular, one direction is to strengthen our security. We will discuss a new format of cooperation announced between Poland, Ukraine, and the UK as well as lobbying our interests in NATO and the EU, and coordinated positions on restraint policies against Russia," Samadashvili said.

Lelo explained that they are planning on meeting with representatives of all major political groups and the Ukrainian people and the Ukrainian political spectrum should know that we strongly support Ukraine's sovereignty. "We are also going to establish cooperation formats with the relevant forces in Ukraine,

which will strengthen both their country and our country," she added.

The delegation of "Droa" will leave for Kyiv as well. Elene Khoshtaria said that there will be meetings in the Rada with journalists, non-governmental organiza-

tions, and Georgians living in Ukraine. "Droa" will also bring the flags of Ukraine and Georgia to the Rada, on which signatures and messages of support for the citizens are placed.

"We want to meet the Georgian mili-



► Ukrainian lawmakers held up flags in parliament of countries that have shown them support.

Resolution of Ukraine - Watershed Between the Government and the Opposition

By MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

A joint resolution in support of Ukraine could not be reached in the Georgian Parliament. The draft resolution registered by the Georgian Dream turned out to be unacceptable to the opposition, as it did not mention Russia, aggression, or occupation at all. Unfortunately, there was no issue in Georgian politics on which the government and the opposition would have a common position.

However, Ukraine is a strategic partner of Georgia, and deterrence of Russian aggression is important for both countries. Russia's victory in Ukraine deprives Georgia, like other post-Soviet countries, of a chance to escape Russia's neo-imperial plans.

Russia's possible attack on Ukraine has been in the media spotlight for several months. Possible war scenarios are considered. In this situation, many countries have openly expressed their support for Ukraine. In the current situation, the silence of the Georgian government, which said virtually nothing about supporting a strategic partner, is very noticeable.

This causes resentment inside the country and surprise

among foreign friends. For example, former US Ambassador to Georgia Ian Kelly told RFE / RL that "a dizzy Tbilisi is a disappointing sight for any friend of Georgia" and that Georgia's passivity is 'disappointing'.

According to him, it is hard to believe that the Prime Minister or the President of Georgia has not yet shown open support for Kyiv. Former President of Georgia Giorgi Margvelashvili agrees with this opinion, stating that Ukraine's support is a 'test of dignity' for Georgia. "At least support Ukraine and call Putin an aggressor, then - impose sanctions, even better - send weapons," said Margvelashvili.

The government's policy towards Ukraine has been criticized by much of the opposition. According to Giorgi Vashadze, the leader of 'Strategy Builder', this position "poses a great threat to Georgia." Georgian experts and opposition politicians believe that the threat to Ukraine directly affects Georgia's security.

According to the opponents of the government, the Georgian officials should work in an emergency mode and clearly express their support for Ukraine.

According to them, Georgia's strategic interest is to stand firmly by Ukraine now, because if Ukraine 'loses', Georgia will face the same problems as it did in 2008.

The third president of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili, says that in case of aggression against Ukraine, Putin will invade Georgia as well. According to Saakashvili, as soon as the aggression in Ukraine begins, Putin will occupy Anaklia and Poti and invade Samegrelo to "block the West from using our ports now and building the Anaklia / Lazika port in the future."

In the conditions of passivity of the government, the opposition has become especially active in recent days. Leaders of several opposition parties (National Movement, Lelo, Strategy Builder) met with the Ambassador of Ukraine to Georgia, and the opposition came up with several initiatives:

The parliament passed a multi-party resolution in support of Ukraine, a parliamentary delegation consisting of representatives of the government and the opposition arrived in Kyiv, as well as the Prime Minister of Georgia, who has not said

anything to support Ukraine, which is facing a crisis.

The first step in this direction seemed to have been successful. On January 26, the Georgian Dream presented a draft parliamentary resolution on a possible military escalation in Ukraine, which, with some remarks, was acceptable to the opposition. But suddenly, as representatives of the opposition said, before the second round of talks, the mention of Russian aggression disappeared from the draft resolution.

The resolution of the 'Georgian Dream' protects Ukraine, so it does not mention who is threatening Ukraine, it is only about "not allowing war in Ukraine in general." The text was unacceptable to the opposition and they refused to support it.

According to Mamuka Mdinardze, one of the leaders of the ruling party, "the resolution is completely devoid of provocative and populist rhetoric" and "every word, every phrase stems from the national interests of Georgia." According to the representatives of the opposition, they consider it necessary to call everything by its name and should directly say that Ukraine

is threatened by Russian aggression. The Georgian government, in the end, did not dare to say that. However, this was not ruled out at first.

"Georgia today has a government that is not cautious, it is engaged in vassal politics," Nino Burjanadze said. The opposition also notes that such a change in the draft resolution of the 'Georgian Dream' could be made only by one man, who has officially left politics.

The opposition is talking about future plans. Due to the number of votes in parliament, the opposition will not be able to pass its version of the resolution. They may make a joint statement and thus break away from the Georgian Dream resolution, which they consider to be 'damaging' to the country's reputation.

It seems that the Georgian Dream will adopt its resolution alone at the spring parliamentary session. The situation in Ukraine may be somewhat calmed by this time. However, what is happening today in connection with the developments around Ukraine is a peculiar test for both countries and parties and individual politicians.

AFD and Ministry of Finance sign the Policy-Based Loan co-financing Water Supply and Sanitation Reform of Georgia

French Development Agency (AFD) and the Ministry of Finance of Georgia have signed a €30 million Policy-Based Loan to support the Sustainable Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Development Program of Georgia on January 28. The loan was signed at the Ministry of Finance premises by Cécile Couprie, AFD Regional Director for Eurasia and Lasha Khutsishvili, Minister of Finance of Georgia.

The concrete objective of the program is to support the Georgian authorities to improve the governance and the institutional capacity in water supply and sanitation sector, while strengthening urban and rural



► AFD strives to protect global public goods – promoting a stable climate, biodiversity and peace, as well as gender equality, education and healthcare.

water supply and sanitation sector governance.

This AFD loan amounts to €30 million, a second tranche co-financing of the PBL disbursed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Apart from this policy-based loan support, technical assistance will also be provided by AFD to Georgia with a grant of €500,000 from the French Fund for exchange and technical expertise (FEXTE). The final purpose of the project is to improve the living conditions of the Georgian population by developing water and sanitation services.

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| THURSDAY | | FEBRUARY 3 | |
| Day | | Partly cloudy | High: 15°C |
| Night | | Partly cloudy | Low: 3°C |
| FRIDAY | | FEBRUARY 4 | |
| Day | | Mainly cloudy | High: 12°C |
| Night | | Windy | Low: 2°C |

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National Bank of Georgia Keeps its Monetary Policy Rate Unchanged at 10.5%

► According to the National Bank of Georgia, the country's economy is expected to grow by 5% in 2022.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

The Monetary Policy Committee of the National Bank of Georgia has decided to keep the refinancing rate unchanged at 10.5%.

The committee maintained a tight monetary policy to prevent long-term inflation expectations against the background of strong supply shocks and the current high rate of inflation in Georgia. The GDP notes that they will stick to the same policy until the risks of rising inflation expectations are sufficiently mitigated.

According to the statement, the extraordinary situation caused by the pandemic has resulted in a high inflation environment, which also affected Georgia. The NBG notes that in December, the annual inflation rate rose to 13.9%, the main reason of which was the base effect of the 2020 subsidy on utility bills.

“Overall though, since the first half of 2021, high inflation has been driven by globally rising prices for food, oil, and ship-



► The next meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee will be held on March 30, 2022.

ping. Consequently, high inflation is largely due to imported goods, that reflect increased US dollar prices in international markets,” the NBG notes, adding that the recent strengthening of the nominal effective GEL exchange rate has somewhat eased the pressure from international markets.

The Central Bank further said that the high inflation rate would continue to persist in January and February, before starting to decline gradually from spring and would eventually approach the target by the end of the year.

According to the preliminary data, real GDP amounted to 10.6% in 2021 and as for 2022, the economic growth is projected at 5%. The central bank also highlighted positive trends in terms of foreign demand, noting that in December 2021 exports increased by about 29% annually, while the increase compared to the corresponding period of 2019 is 6%.

AFD and Ministry of Finance sign the Policy-Based Loan co-financing Water Supply and Sanitation Reform of Georgia

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“The determination of the Georgian authorities and society to achieve the transformative process of becoming a European style state and economy is admirable. We in France and the EU are very keen to support this, today by signing this public policy loan on water management. It will improve governance, con-

solidate democratic local institutions and thereby ensure better delivery of public services”, said HE. Diégo Colas, Ambassador of France to Georgia.

“France is an important development partner for Georgia with timely and efficient delivery of assistance, through AFD in line with the country's development priorities. Today signing this Credit Facility Agreement is another illustration of our

significant partnership”, said Finance Minister Lasha Khutishvili. He is deeply convinced that the goals of this agreement that is improving governance and institutional capacity in the water supply and sanitation sector, including strengthening of urban and rural water supply and sanitation sector governance will significantly help the country development.

At the conclusion of this

event, Ms Cécile Couprie mentioned that “the signing of this project, along with its technical assistance component, represents a strong commitment by AFD to support Georgia in its will to support ambitious reforms. It shows our common determination to work together for a more sustainable and fair growth in the country. Water and Sanitation sector is one crucial aspect of it.”

Note that AFD implements

France's policy on international development and solidarity. Through its financing of NGOs and the public sector, as well as its research and publications, AFD supports and accelerates transitions towards a fairer, more resilient world. AFD teams are at work on more than 4,000 projects in the field, in the French Overseas Departments and Territories, in 115 countries and in regions in crisis.