

European Parliament's Rapporteur on Georgia Sven Mikser Pays Official Visit to Tbilisi



► "The European Parliament and the EU member states stand by Georgia when it comes to supporting territorial integrity, the country's right to decide its own aspirations."

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

European Parliament Rapporteur for Georgia, MEP Sven Mikser (S&D, Estonia) arrived in Tbilisi on February 2. He first met Georgian President Salome Zurbishvili.

At the meeting, parties discussed the 'national accord' process, initiated by President herself to promote dialogue among Georgian political parties to overcome protracted polarization. MEP Mikser said in a tweet that the sides discussed 'how to widen the space for political debate on urgent issues of concern to Georgian society.'

The next day, MEP visited the Parliament of Georgia, where separate meetings were held with the Speaker of the Parliament and opposition, Mikser attended the committee hearing as well.

"I want to encourage Georgia to be ambitious. All countries have the right to apply for membership, but the enlargement is a separate issue, separate from the Eastern Partnership. The Association Agreement is a very important step in the process of striving for integration, but it does not automatically lead the country to candidacy. The success of this process depends on a number of issues, but the readiness of the country is critical," he said while addressing a joint sitting of the European Integration and External Relations Committee.

MEP added that the door of this opportunity opens and closes and for a very long time Georgia may have to wait for the door to open next time, once again encouraging an ambitious approach and noting that most of the reforms that are part of the Association Agreement benefit the Georgian business climate and the Georgian society.

He reiterated the European Parliament's, as well as the EU member states' support of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the country's right to choose the path, to decide its own aspirations, and to apply to international organizations, which is a fundamental principle in the Euro-Atlantic community.

"There is a very strong position in the agreement that the old concept of areas of privileged interests and influence should not be returned by Russia or any other country," Mikser announced, meaning that a third country should not have a veto over the aspirations of aspirant countries in the Euro-Atlantic community.

In addition, MEP says that the poli-



► "The search for a compromise is good, but he himself said that if a compromise cannot be found, we should not stop and continue the movement," Samkharadze said.

tical class and decision-makers should actually live up to people's expectations, not disappoint people.

According to him, politics is becoming more and more antagonistic and polarized in many countries around the world and Georgia is one example where political antagonism and political polarization periodically cover the entire political discourse and process. Mikser recalled the EU's delegation to Georgia and the agreement reached at the request of the President of the Council of the EU, noting that the EU is ready to help ease the process when needed, but it's the job of the Georgian people to solve the challenges facing the country.

Akaki Minashvili, a member of the United National Movement, asked MEP about the detained former President of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili, claiming that Saakashvili has certain health problems and does not have access to properly qualified doctors and experts. As the rapporteur of the European Parliament stated, the fundamental principle is that everyone should have the right to humane, fair treatment.

Nikoloz Samkharadze, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee said "We are waiting for a new agenda from the EU, which envisages an action plan for the next 6 years," adding that it is important that Georgia actively pursues the implementation of reforms.

He addressed Sven Mikser, MEP, to remove the term 'South Ossetia' from official documents of the EU and its structures, since Georgia doesn't recognize this Stalinist term, coined in 1922 and it is not pleasant when its partners use it.

"My most obedient request will be to think about this issue and if anything is needed from us, an official adjustment, we will do it," Samkharadze said.

Mikser responded to this remark saying that in the future when formulating European documents related to Georgia, the issue of wording will be taken into account.

Mikser also made comments, saying that both the ruling party and most of the opposition parties are well aware of the need to support Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. According to him, everyone also understands the danger of Russian aggression. However, it would be good if Georgian politicians had a unified position to the end.

"I think these debates have revealed one side of Georgian politics - that is, that there is no tradition and respect among Georgian politicians for opportunities for compromise, for building bridges. It is perceived in the European Parliament as a sign of strength, but for many Georgian politicians it seems to be a sign of weakness, which is unfortunate," MEP said, noting that both sides should take care of how to correct the possibility of reaching compromises.

According to him, the initial environment allowed Georgian politicians to take a united stand, and the fact is that this rare opportunity to demonstrate unity was missed.

EXCHANGE RATES: US DOLLAR - 3.0286 | EURO - 3.4250 | GBP - 4.1031 | 100 RUSSIAN RUBLE - 4.9788 | SWISS FRANC - 3.2941 |

Former President Mikheil Saakashvili Presents 9-point Economic Development Plan

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

The third president of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili has published the main theses of his economic development vision. The economic plan has nine main objectives, including, judicial reform, English law, arbitration, decriminalization of economic crimes; energetic development, Bureaucracy for the people and the elimination of irrelevant spending; Introduction of a single tax principle; Infrastructure and transport development; Lazika construction, agricultural development, and the Georgian silicon valley.

According to the former president, less bureaucracy, stable and democratic change of government, non-corrupt and competent court, and less state intervention in the economy are crucial for achieving economic development.

As he notes, the current judicial system in Georgia is incapable of protecting the rights of investors because it is dependent on a particular "financial clan", claiming that in such an environment, attracting investments is unrealistic. In his opinion, the



► The former president stresses the need for judicial reform, noting that Georgia must allow the unrestricted use of English law throughout the country.

judiciary needs to change radically and the practice of delaying cases for many years needs to be abolished, because, according to him, it harms citizens and investors no less than the unfair decision itself. He stresses that Georgia should allow the unrestricted use of English law throughout the country for all

kinds of commercial transactions and the parties themselves should be able to choose how to continue the disputes.

Regarding 'the law of delogarchization', Saakashvili believes that any individual whose property exceeds 5 percent of the country's GDP must be prohibited from establishing

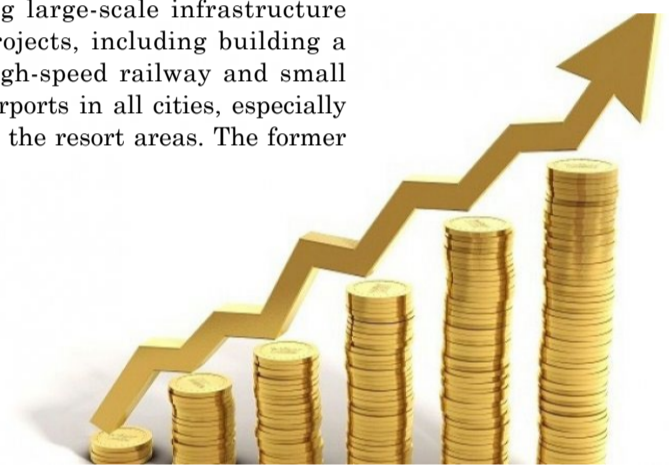
and financing a political party or participating in its activity in any other way.

Saakashvili's economic plan also focuses on energy development, stressing that hydroelectric power plants (HPP) should be built in the country, but this must be done based on a complete, in-depth, and qualified analysis. "The HPPs must be completely safe and the negative impact on the environment must be minimized," reads the former president's statement.

According to the plan, Georgia must become the logistical center of the region by implementing large-scale infrastructure projects, including building a high-speed railway and small airports in all cities, especially in the resort areas. The former

president also reviews the agricultural sector, stressing that new technologies play a major role in this direction.

The construction of Lazika also plays an important role in the economic vision program and according to Saakashvili, in a maximum of 10 years, it will be possible to create 200 thousand jobs via this project, noting that the idea of building a new big city on the Black Sea coast of Georgia is more relevant than ever.



► According to Saakashvili, in a maximum of 10 years 200 thousand jobs will be created via the Lazika project.

Gamkrelidze: 70% of the Population Should be Vaccinated by July

BY THE MESSENGER STAFF

According to the head of the Center for Disease Control, Amiran Gamkrelidze, the new immunization plan was discussed at the current Immunization Council. As he pointed out, the new, 2022 plan stipulates that 70% of the population should be vaccinated by July.

"This plan stipulates that 70% of the population must be vaccinated by July - in the first

six months if we are to stop the Omicron wave, contain it, and get out of the pandemic with relatively little damage. Everyone agrees that the main way to end a pandemic and epidemic is through universal immunization," said Gamkrelidze.

The head of the NCDC says the plan focuses on the vaccination information campaign and incentive schemes.

"Here are some key recommendations from the group that wrote the plan to strength-



en their communication campaigns. Again, to continue and strengthen monetary incentives, to provide more information to the public and, most importantly, to focus on boosters, because the strongest factor in Omicron retention is the third factor."

According to the government's plan, by the end of 2021, 60% of the population should have been fully vaccinated.

As of February 3, 42.6% of the adult population in Georgia is fully vaccinated.

FRIDAY	FEBRUARY 4
Day	Mainly cloudy High: 12°C
Night	Windy Low: 2°C
SATURDAY	FEBRUARY 5
Day	Partly cloudy High: 5°C
Night	Few clouds Low: -2°C

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