

Georgia Condemns Russia's Recognition of Ukrainian Regions' Independence



Georgian officials condemn Russia's decision and express support towards Ukraine's territorial integrity.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Georgian government officials and the President of Georgia have condemned the recognition of the independence of Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

President Salome Zourabichvili tweeted that Russia's recognition of Ukrainian regions repeats the scenario that led to the occupation of 20% of Georgia's territory. The president stressed that Georgia stands by Ukrainian President Zelensky and supports Ukraine's territorial integrity and peace.

Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili also condemned Russia's recent move, stating that this is yet another step of Russia directed against the fundamental principles of international law and, unfortunately, repeats the Kremlin's recognition of the independence of the occupied Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in 2008.

Foreign Minister David Zalkaliani also expressed support towards Ukraine's territorial integrity and called on international partners to respond to another violation of European security and international law.

A separate statement released by the foreign ministry reads that Georgia is following with concern the recent developments around Ukraine, "which is a very serious challenge to European and global security." MFA once again reaffirm support towards Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty and expressed hope that the international community would react and give its strict assessment to the 'absolutely unacceptable attempt to redraw forcefully the state borders in East Europe'.

According to ex-Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia, who is currently the leader of the political party For Georgia, history is repeating and the west should not

make the same mistakes as in 2008. "Allies must act now! We Stand by Ukraine!" he tweeted.

Opposition Lelo party condemned Russia's actions in its statement on February 22 and expressed hope that the international community would respond strictly by imposing sanctions against Russia and strengthening Ukraine's security. The party also called on the Par-

liament to adopt a resolution to condemn Putin's decision.

The Droa party stressed that Putin's speech on Monday was "an open declaration of his intentions to restore the Russian Empire, which shows the true motives behind Russia's previous aggressions and future plans." The party called on international partners to use personal, as well as economic, financial, and diplo-

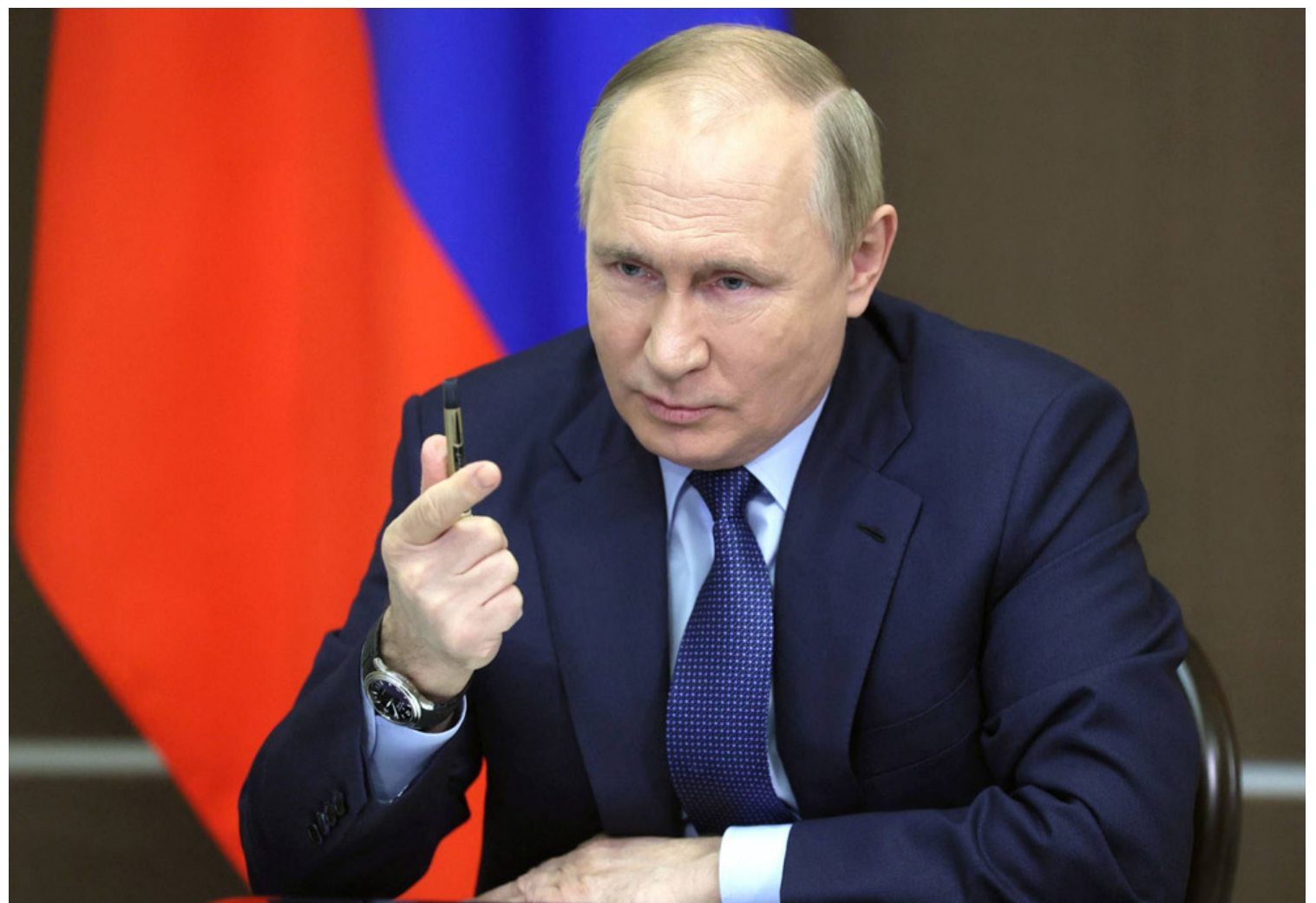
matic sanctions as an instrument against Kremlin's aggression and also stressed the importance of providing Ukraine with defensive military capabilities.

Representatives of Georgia's civil society and academic community have addressed Antony Blinken, United States Secretary of State, with a letter concerning the movements of the Russian Federation along Ukraine's border. According to the letter, representatives of Georgia's civil society and academic community firmly stand with the Ukrainian people amidst the Russian troop buildup on the Ukrainian border. It is noted that Russia's ongoing and possible destructive actions pose a threat to Euro-Atlantic security as well as modern international order and put western values and principles at risk.

"The Russian dangerous actions infringe the territorial integrity of Georgia and Ukraine every single day in the 21st century," reads the letter.

Russian President signed a decree recognizing two breakaway regions in Ukraine's east as independent states on February 21. Soon after signing the decree, Putin ordered troops into eastern Ukrainian regions, calling it a "peacekeeping" mission.

The Council of Europe Secretary-General Marija Pejcinovic Buric has published a statement stressing that the recognition of the so-called 'people's republics' of Donetsk and Luhansk violates international law and the Minsk agreement. The Council of Europe affirms its support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders and calls on the Russian Federation to reverse the decision and "abstain from further aggravating the situation."



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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 3.0030; Euro - 3.4063; GBP - 4.0745; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.8131; Swiss Franc - 3.2680

Part of Existing Covid Regulations to be Lifted in March, Interagency Coordination Council Says

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

According to the decision of the Interagency Coordination Council, most of the existing restrictions will be lifted from March. As for the obligation to wear a mask in the open, it was said that the existing restrictions remain in force. The subject will continue to be discussed and as soon as the epidemiological situation shows a tendency to improve, the obligation will be revised.

The following obligations will be canceled or eased from March:

10 people will be allowed to sit at the table in restaurants and 15 people in the open. So far 6 people were allowed. The limit on the maximum number of guests is lifted.

Large-scale celebrations and social gatherings like weddings will be allowed again. In this case, it will be possible for 10 people to sit at one table indoors, and for 15 people to sit in an open space.

The so-called Covid hotels will no longer operate.

The obligation of thermal screening and logging, as well as barriers will be abolished.

Hotels buffets will be allowed to serve guests.

From March 4, clubs will resume operating, using only 60% of the space.

Conferences and seminars will be allowed from March 15 without any restrictions.

“The council is still working and from March 1, this mitigation may expand and become even more diverse, but obviously, everything will depend on the epidemiological situation.”

Deputy Minister of Health Tamar Gabunia spoke about the lifting of restrictions on the briefing and other measures related to pandemic management.

“The epidemic picture is different against the background of Omicron, and therefore, a different approach is needed to control it. As for the vaccination program, the main stimulus for vaccination has so far been the mechanism of financial incentives; Green pass regulations played a role, but they had a limited effect.”

According to Gabunia, it is important to share the experience of other countries and follow the processes that are recommended in terms of management.

“Most importantly - facemasks, social distancing and a number of recommendations for basic hygiene remain in place. It is very important to follow them,” Gabunia said, reiterating that booster doses are important and that the ministry is working to replenish vaccine doses. All the measures that



The meetings of the Coordination Council will be held once in two weeks.

ensure the pace of vaccination will be intensified.

Amiran Gamkrelidze, director of the National Center for Disease Control, said it can be boldly said that the peak of Omicron has passed.

“The number of cases is slowly decreasing, but is higher than the allowed ‘limit’. It is also declining, but we have more than the

permissible threshold for daily mortality per million inhabitants.” According to Gamkrelidze, in order to keep the declining trend, we must strengthen boosterization - in such case, by June the forecast is that we will come down to 1000 cases daily with new cases. He also informed that covid-related mortality cases significantly reduced in January-

February.

According to the information published on Stopcov.ge, 12,101 new cases of infection were detected in the last 24 hours, 14,764 people recovered and 45 people died. As for the positive rate, as of February 21, the daily positive rate is 25.48%, for the last 14 days - 30.65% and for 7 days - 28.55%.

By THE MESSENGER STAFF

Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy chairman of the Security Council and former president, says that after the suspension of the Nord Stream 2 project, Europe will pay 2,000 euros for 1,000 cubic meters of gas. He writes about it on Twitter.

“What are we going to do? Welcome to a new world in which Europeans will soon pay 2,000 euros for 1,000 cubic meters of gas,” Medvedev wrote.

On February 21, Vladimir Putin recognized the independence of occupied Donetsk and Lugansk. Within hours, he ordered troops to enter Donbas. An order signed by the Russian president says troops are being deployed “for the sake of peace.”

In response to Russia, Germany suspended the certification process for the Nord Stream 2 pipeline.

Nord Stream 2 is a 1,200-kilometer pipeline that runs along the bottom of the Baltic Sea and aims to supply natural gas from Russia to Germany.

It was planned that Germany would receive 55 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually from Russia through the pipeline. The cost of the project is 10 billion euros. Its construction was completed in September 2021 and the pipes were also filled with gas in October.

Former German Chancellor Angela Merkel worked hard for the Nord Stream 2 project. 35% of Germany’s gas supply is already occupied by Russian natural gas. Merkel hoped that this pipeline would make it easier to get gas from Russia directly to Germany.

North Stream 2 project was opposed by Ukraine, on whose territory one of the main natu-

Dmitry Medvedev: Europe Will Pay €2,000 for 1,000 m³ gas

ral gas importers to Europe used to pass. Volodymyr Zelensky called it a ‘dangerous political weapon.’ The project also threat-

ens the interests of Poland.

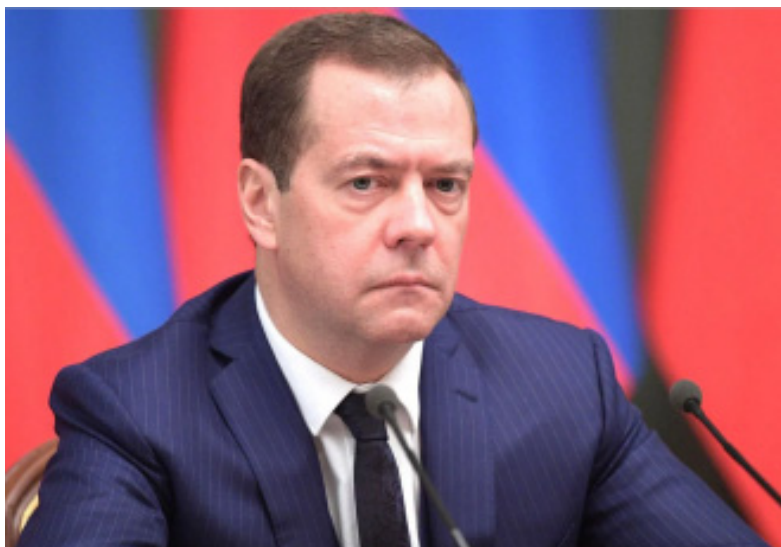
In addition, the North Stream 2 project raises fears that EU countries, and especially

Germany, will become energy-dependent on Russia. It is for this reason that the US and the UK oppose the Nord Stream 2 project.

In July 2021, Germany and the United States reached an agreement that the United States would allow the pipeline to be built without imposing additional sanctions, and in return, Germany would extend its natural gas transit contract with Russia and Ukraine for another 10 years. The document expires in 2024.

In November 2021, the U.S. imposed sanctions on North Stream 2.

The issue of tightening sanctions on the Nord Stream project has intensified since Russia deployed more than 100,000 troops along the Ukrainian border.



Weather

Wednesday, February 23

Day ☀️ Clear
High: 17°C
Night 🌙 Clear
Low: 4°C

Thursday, February 24

Day ☀️ Clear
High: 18°C
Night 🌧️ Partly Cloudy
Low: 6°C

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