

Georgian PM Addresses NATO Membership, Territorial Integrity Issues at Qatar Forum

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili said during a panel discussion at the Qatar Economic Forum that Georgia first needs to resolve its territorial problems to become a member of NATO. As the Prime Minister noted, whether Georgia will join NATO depends on the country's strategic readiness and patience, as well as on a consensus of all member states of the Alliance to grant Georgia NATO membership.

"We are not naive, we understand that Georgia has territorial problems, we must solve this issue first and then become a member of NATO, this is the opinion of our European and NATO member states," Garibashvili stated at the forum.

The Prime Minister's remarks have caused controversy, with Former Deputy Foreign Minister and ex Vice Speaker of the Parliament, Sergi Kapandze stating that PM Garibashvili "basically says no to NATO, claiming that Georgia first has to resolve territorial problems and then join." For Georgia party member Kakhaber Kemoklidze, who is an ex-Head of the Government Administration, also reacted to Garibashvili's statement, saying that the remarks made by him were 'damaging' and 'a gift to Russia'.

At the Qatar Forum, the PM also stressed that Georgia fought against Russia three times over the last 30 years and the Georgian government's policy is to restore territorial integrity and sovereignty through peaceful



According to Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili, Georgia first needs to resolve its territorial problems to become a member of NATO.

negotiations. Asked if he could trust Russian President Vladimir Putin in solving Georgia's territorial issues, Garibashvili responded: "We have not had any contacts since we came to power in 2012, there have been no political consultations, only economic, trade relationship exists, this is the reality we live in."

At the forum, the PM also focused on the government not imposing national economic sanctions on Russia for invading Ukraine. According to him, the head of the Government needs to "think about the security of

Georgian people" in making decisions on the matter, pointing out that the country is in 'quite a vulnerable situation' due to the Russian occupation. He noted that Georgia was 'not the only country' that did not impose national economic sanctions on Russia, stating that Moldova chose the same policy for 'very obvious reasons'.

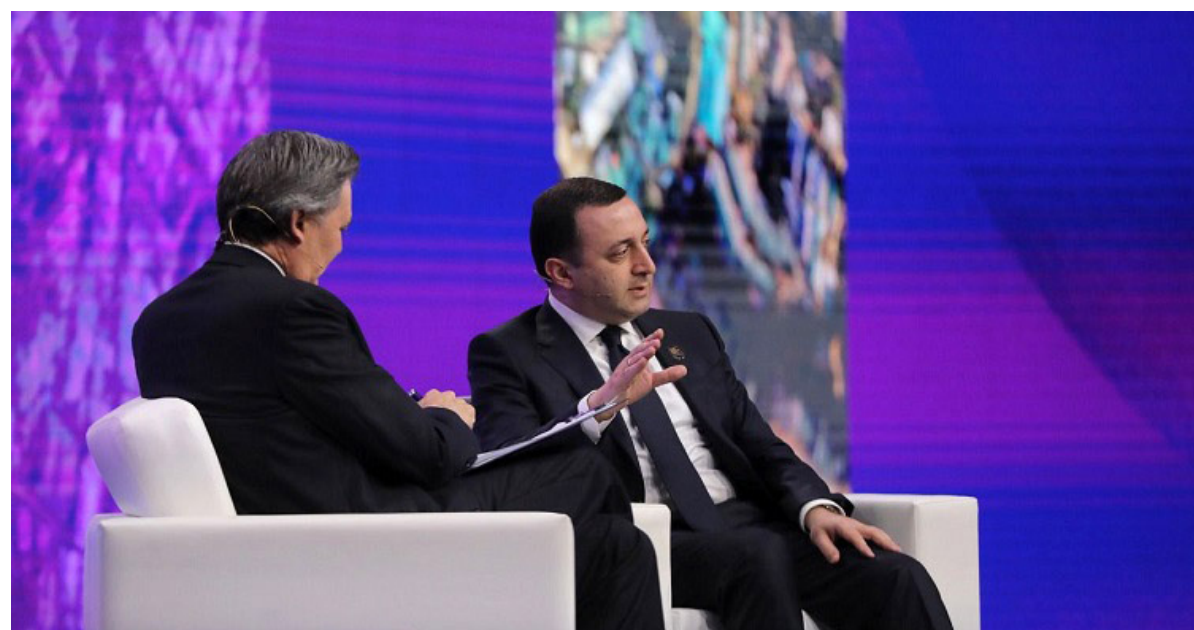
As Garibashvili noted, Georgia fully aligns with the international community over its sanctions on Russia. According to him, the government has made it "very clear" that "no sanctioned individual or com-

pany" will be allowed to use Georgia to bypass the sanctions, stressing that closing the sanctioned Russian VTB Bank in Georgia was a clear example of this.

The Prime Minister also touched upon the 2008 war, stressing that there was "no proper, adequate reaction" from the world and 'no sanctions were imposed' on Russia for invading and eventually occupying two of Georgia's regions.

"I want to remind everyone that during that time in 2008, no one in the world paid enough attention to the fact a sovereign nation, the independent country of Georgia, was invaded by Russia, which occupied 20 percent of its territory. There was no reaction - no adequate, proper reaction - from the world", Garibashvili noted.

The Georgian Prime Minister started his visit to Doha, the capital of Qatar, on Monday. Within the framework of his visit, the PM will hold bilateral high-level meetings. Yesterday, Georgia and Qatar signed two agreements on Mutual Support and Protection of Investments and on Economic, Trade, and Technical Cooperation. The deals were signed following the meeting between Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili and Khalid bin Khalifa bin Abdulaziz Al Thani, the Prime Minister and Interior Minister of Qatar.



"We cannot impose sanctions [on Russia] for natural reasons because we have national interests, Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili said.

The News in Brief

PREPARED
BY MESSENGER STAFF

Goncharenko: Do not allow Georgians to be Captives of an Oligarch

"Now they [Georgia] have problems, but please do not allow Georgians to be captives of one oligarch. Dear brothers, we must support you and say that the Georgian people must be inside Europe. Give candidate status to Georgia as well.

A NATO summit will be held next week. I appeal to Turkey to support the accession of Finland and Sweden to the alliance.

I would like to address all NATO member states, please support Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia and provide MAP (Action Plan). We must be united, and strong, to fight all the dangers that threaten us today."

Lomjaria Observes Georgians Not Given Up on Fighting for Values

Public Defender Nino Lomjaria published her brief impressions on June 20 rally.

"My impressions from yesterday's rally:

1. Research results that 80% -90% of the population wants Europe are a reality;
2. If there were supporters of all the parties at the rally, this is great! It means that people are taking steps to meet the requirements for depolarization;
3. Georgian society (regardless of generation) is much more progressive and European than the Georgian political elite;
4. The propaganda and steps of the ruling party, which were constantly aimed at stereotypical Georgians with a post-Soviet mentality, will simply not work, as you see in paragraph 3.
5. People are neither relaxed nor tired of fighting for values, nor tangible alienation between generations or between political views, they are simply tired of most of the existing opposition political spectrum, and this is the weakness of Georgian democracy, along with the authoritarian rule."

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.9277; Euro - 3.0925; GBP - 3.6002; 100 Russian Ruble - 5.3519; Swiss Franc - 3.0329

Labor Mediation Ended with Agreement Between IDS Borjomi Management and Employees

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Labor mediation ended with an agreement between the management and employees of IDS Borjomi Georgia. According to the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, as a result of successful negotiations, the employees will continue working in the factory and IDS Borjomi Georgia will be fully operational in the near future.

According to the decision of the Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Gharibashvili, his representative, Head of the Department of Regional Relations of the Government of Georgia Leri Barnabishvili was personally involved in the negotiation process. As the PM stated, the protection of the rights of each employee employed in IDS Borjomi Georgia will be ensured. The mediation agreement was signed



by the parties in Borjomi. Beka Peradze, Head of the Labor Inspection Service, and

Besik Amiranashvili, State Representative in the Samtskhe-Javakheti Region attended the

meeting. Recall that after the announcement of the company

“Borjomi” to stop production in April, a disagreement arose over the new employment contracts offered to employees by the administration.

The mediation process started with the support of the Union of Agriculture, Trade, and Industry and with the involvement of the Ministry of Health, which ended in vain on 27 May. Since then, the company’s employees have been protesting with 4 main demands: Return of 50 illegally fired employees; Return to the old contractual terms; Replacement of 3-6-month and 1-year contracts with permanent contracts; Coercion, dismissal of administration employees observed in blackmail and threats.

On June 9, Public Defender Nino Lomjaria met with the striking employees of Borjomi. She said the ombudsman’s office would launch an investigation into possible employee discrimination by the company.

Export to EU Increased, Geostat Says



By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Exports of goods from Georgia to the EU have increased. According to the report published by the National Statistics Office of Georgia, \$ 352 million worth of goods left Georgia for the EU in January-May 2022, which is \$ 100 million or 39% more than the previous year.

As a result, 22.3% of Georgia’s total exports come to the EU, compared to 16.4% of total exports to the EU last year. According to statistics, Georgia’s

main exports to the EU are copper ores, whose exports increased by 52% to \$ 165 million. The second position is occupied by hazelnuts, whose exports increased by 32% to \$ 26 million. Next comes Ferroalloys - \$ 18 million, 10,100 tons, an increase of 153%; Cars - \$ 16.8 million, an increase of 85% over the previous year; Mineral fertilizers - \$ 14.5 million, 27,000 tons, an increase of 84% over the previous year.

Nevertheless, the EU is not Georgia’s main export market. The number 1 place is occupied by China, where \$ 362 million worth of goods were exported in January-May 2022, which is more than the total EU exports. Exports to China increased by 38%. In second place is Azerbaijan, where exports were 224 million, an increase of 15%. Russia is in third place with 210 million, whereas Georgia increased its exports by 3.7%.

Georgia’s largest export among EU countries is to Bulgaria, where 176 million goods were exported, which is 82% more than the previous year.

Continuation of the Manager Training Programme with Georgia

The German-Georgian Manager Training Programme has been in existence since 2016 and aims to prepare managers from Georgia specifically for business initiation and economic cooperation with German companies.

Every year, around 20 Georgian managers take part in this practice-oriented training. They come from companies with foreign trade potential that wish to establish contacts in Germany. The focus is on small and medium-sized enterprises.

Under the motto “Fit for Partnership with Germany”, the participants acquire management skills, gain insights into German business practice and establish contacts with mainly medium-sized German companies. The programme is aimed at upper and middle management levels of Georgian enterprises and is open to all sectors. So far, 141 entrepreneurs from Georgia have participated in the programme.

The existing intergovernmental agreement between the Ger-

man Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Protection and the Georgian Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development for the Manager Training Programme was extended until the end of 2024 on 21 June 2022 during a festive event with the alumni of the programme. The joint agreement was signed by Ambassador Hubert Knirsch and Deputy Minister Genadi Arveladze.

See photo coverage on pages 3-5



Weather

Wednesday, June 22

Day Few Showers
High: 27°C

Night Mostly Cloudy
Low: 18°C

Thursday, June 23

Day Mostly Cloudy
High: 26°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 15°C

published by
The Messenger

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0108, Georgia
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