

Public Defender Nino Lomjaria criticizes Ombudsman selection method initiated by Georgian Dream

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Public Defender Nino Lomjaria assessed the draft law on the temporary rules for the election of the Public Defender, initiated by the "Georgian Dream", which the Parliament is rapidly working on.

As the Public Defender notes, the term of office of the current Public Defender expires on December 8, 2022. The request of the European Union before giving Georgia the status of a candidate country of the European Union requires, among other things, to give preference to an independent person in the nomination of the public defender, to conduct the process transparently and to ensure the effective institutional independence of the office. According to the explanatory card, the presented bill serves the purpose of fulfilling this recommendation.

"Unfortunately, the text of the draft law and the time of the committee hearing were not known to the publicly interested persons in advance, for a reasonable period of time. Without the aforementioned preconditions, it is impossible to talk about creating the possibility of civil society involvement and the inclusive process, which, according to the Public Defender's assessment, must be taken into account during the discussion of this important issue," the statement reads.



The statement on the contents of the draft law states that none of the international standards or documents mentioned in the explanatory note speaks of the temporary introduction of public defender selection procedures, but indicates the need to firmly define them at the legislative level.

"Also, according to the presented project, the regulation of

the main issues related to the election of the public defender is envisaged by the chairman of the parliament alone, in the form of an order, which excludes a high degree of transparency and involvement. If the current version of the draft law is supported, the chairman of the parliament will also be given the opportunity to define the circle of subjects pre-

sending the candidate differently from the law, which raises questions both from the point of view of the rule of law and legislative technique. It is better to regulate important procedural issues and guarantees by the law, and by the order of the Speaker of the Parliament, procedural details of relatively minor importance should be determined", the Pub-

lic Defender said.

The Public Defender expresses hope that the Parliament of Georgia will take into account the mentioned opinions and standards in the process of reviewing the draft law, and an impartial, objective and highly qualified candidate for the Public Defender will be selected based on them and in accordance with the best standards.

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The 7th session of the Association Council between Georgia and the European Union was held in Brussels on September 6, 2022. The session was co-chaired by Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Garibashvili and EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Joseph Borrell. After the meeting, the Association Council issued a joint statement to the press.

As mentioned in the statement, the participants emphasized the readiness of the European Council to grant Georgia the candidate status as soon as it fulfills the priorities defined in the opinion of the European Commission. It also says the future of Georgia and its citizens lies in the European Union.

"In this context, the European Union welcomed the work started in the Parliament of Georgia and called on the ruling party to engage in an inclusive process together with representatives of civil society and parliamentary opposition groups. The European Union called on

EU Association Council issues joint statement for Georgia



the Georgian political forces to unite, work together and cooperate in order to fulfill the mentioned priorities, which is the most important task. The European Union emphasized that Georgia's European path is a merit-based process. The European Union is ready to use all tools to support it," the statement reads.

According to the statement, the document includes jointly agreed priorities aimed at promoting the implementation of the Association Agreement, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area.

The Association Council noted that the effective implementation of the Association Agreement and its component of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, which is related to the broader process of regulatory convergence and necessary reforms related to it, contributes to the creation of appropriate conditions for strengthened economic and trade relations with the European Union, thereby contributing to Georgia's further

CONTINUED ON Page 2

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.8657; Euro - 2.8376; GBP - 3.2867; 100 Russian Ruble - 4.6944; Swiss Franc - 2.9090

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

EU Association Council issues joint statement for Georgia

gradual economic integration into the internal market of the European Union, as provided for in the Association Agreement.

"The European Union welcomed Georgia's implementation of a number of complex reforms and the successful convergence of its own legislation with the EU legislation in many fields. However, the EU expressed significant concerns about the lack of substantial progress and negative developments in several key areas in 2021. The European Union called on Georgia to redouble its efforts to further consolidate democracy and reduce political polarization, strengthen the rule of law, the independence, impartiality, and accountability of the judicial system, and the fight against corruption," the statement said.

The European Union called on Georgia to further increase respect for human rights and fun-

damental freedoms, including gender equality and to ensure equal treatment of men and women in social, political, and economic life. EU also emphasized the importance of freedom of the media and the involvement of civil society towards persons belonging to minorities, regardless of religion or belief, race, ethnic or national origin, gender, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, and others.

Democracy, rule of law, and human rights are the main priorities that determine Georgia's progress on the European road. The Association Council welcomed the progress on Human Rights 2022-2030 in the process of strategy development. The European Union has repeatedly noted that the planned discus-

sions in the Parliament of Georgia create a good opportunity for an inclusive approach and proper consultations with all key actors.

The European Union emphasized the need, in the context of the July 5, 2021, Tbilisi Pride March, to ensure effective and efficient investigations of violence against media professionals and to strengthen preventive measures. The European Union called on Georgia to hand over all criminals to justice and at the same time noted the steps taken in this direction. The European Union welcomed that the events related to Tbilisi Pride in 2022 took place in a peaceful environment.

The Association Council emphasized the critical importance of Geneva's international discus-

sions and incident prevention and response mechanisms in working on and resolving challenges arising from the August 2008 conflict between Russia and Georgia.

"The European Union and Georgia condemned the so-called integration signed between the Russian Federation and the Abkhazia region of Georgia, as well as the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia. Further implementation of the "agreements" and other illegal actions of Russia in these regions, including the strengthening of militarization and the erection of barbed wire along the administrative dividing lines, which violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia," the press release reads.

The Association Council ex-

pressed concern over the severe human rights situation in the Abkhazia region and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, particularly arbitrary detentions, restrictions on the right to free movement, violations of the right to property, and the right to study in one's native language, discrimination against Georgians on ethnic grounds, and impunity for the killing of Georgian citizens.

The European Union recognized Georgia as one of the main partners in the region and emphasized the importance of Georgia-EU cooperation in the field of foreign and security policy. The EU welcomed Georgia's continued participation in crisis management operations and missions within the framework of the Common Security and Defense Policy, namely the EU Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic and the EU Training Mission in the Republic of Mali.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

'We started the inclusive process, but some parties do not participate in it' PM Garibashvili says

According to Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili, the government is ready to cooperate with the opposition and conduct an inclusive process to implement the recommendations of the European Union. According to him, the government opened the door to everyone, but the opposition party refuses to participate in this process.

The Prime Minister spoke about this at the press conference together with Joseph Borrell and Oliver Varhelyi after the meeting of the Association Council.

"As soon as the decision of the European Council was announced, we presented a specific action plan on July 1, with specific deadlines for each priority, and started an inclusive process involving various political groups: opposition parties, the government, and civil society.

However, I would like to note



with a heavy heart that some political parties do not participate in this process.

We will continue to work faithfully to fully implement the Association Agreement, including Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade. We have recently adopted a new association agenda for 2021-2027, which reflects our ambitious goals," said Garibashvili after the meeting of the Association Council.

EU will support Georgia on its way to European integration, Borrell and Varhelyi say

The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Joseph Borrell, responded to the holding of the 7th session of the Georgia-EU Association Council

on the social network Twitter.

Borrell wrote that the European Council has confirmed Georgia's bright European perspective, and Georgian political forces should use this historic opportunity to move forward on the path to the European Union.

"After the European Council confirmed Georgia's bright European perspective, I chaired the first session of the EU-Georgia Association Council. The political forces of Georgia should use this historic opportunity to move forward on the path to the European Union. The European Union is ready to be by your side on this path," Joseph Borrell wrote.

European Commissioner for

Enlargement and Neighborhood Policy Oliver Varhelyi noted that the European Union will continue to support Georgia in achieving results in order to give Georgia the status of a candidate for the European Union.

"Together with Joseph Borrell and the Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Garibashvili, we discussed the priorities of the common agenda of the European Union and Georgia. In this difficult time, we will continue to support Georgia to achieve results in order to give Georgia the status of a candidate for the European Union," Oliver Varhelyi wrote on Twitter.

Weather

Thursday, September 8

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 23°C

Night Clear

Low: 12°C

Friday, September 9

Day Clear

High: 27°C

Night Clear

Low: 12°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.