

President Zourabichvili meets with UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili met UNESCO Director General Audrey Azoulay at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris.

Among the discussed issues were the state of cultural heritage in the occupied territories of Georgia and the issues of biodiversity of Georgia.

President Zourabichvili noted at the meeting that in addition to human rights violations in the occupied territories of Georgia, cultural heritage is deliberately damaged and in many cases destroyed, and there is no international mechanism, including UNESCO, which will monitor their condition in the occupied territories and describe the loss and violations.

At the meeting, the President raised the issue of UNESCO monitoring the monuments in the occupied territories through some mechanisms.

As the Director General of UNESCO noted there are similar problems in other areas of the



region, and UNESCO is trying to develop new mechanisms within the framework of the Hague Convention, which will allow the recording and monitor-

ing of the state of cultural heritage sites in conflict zones by means of satellites and other modern technologies.

During the meeting, Presi-

dent Salome Zourabichvili and Director General Audrey Azoulay agreed that Georgia will continue to cooperate with UNESCO in the direction of

improving the methodology of protection and preservation of biological heritage and biodiversity.

Tsulukiani thinks European Parliament's report created grounds to refuse candidacy status for Georgia

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The Minister of Culture Thea Tsulukiani, on the air with Imedi TV, when asked about changes to Association Agreement document by European

Parliament members, said that she assumes that the European parliamentarians have created the ground with the report, so if they need to, they will refuse Georgia's candidate status.

Thea Tsulukiani told journal-

ists that because the Georgian Dream is still in power after 10 years and works to implement 12 recommendations issued by European Union for candidacy status for Georgia, she thinks they have decided to release some

text that will create a ground for them to "say no later if they need to".

According to her, it is even more plausible because Georgia has received a completely unfair decision and other European par-

liamentarians will talk about it after 15 years, just as they are talking now that in 2008 they did not do everything to protect Georgia from Russian aggression.

"This is an unheard-of injustice, and years and generations of MEPs will say, "in 2008 we didn't do everything to protect you from Russia, and that's why, among other reasons, the trouble that's happening in Ukraine happened." Then they admit 15 years later that it was an injustice. God forbid, the disaster happens and Russia enters again... What will be the result of this resolution, what did they do? These are very serious questions. This resolution, let's not fool ourselves, is a bad text, but a bad text for everyone and, first of all, I think, for the European Parliament itself," Tsulukiani said.

According to Tsulukiani, she has doubts about this because everyone sees the possibility of the Georgian Dream having every recommendation fulfilled by December.



Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.7261; Euro - 2.7114; GBP - 3.1028; 100 Russian Ruble - 4.4477; Swiss Franc - 2.7556

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

Georgian politics today: unchanged trends with dim prospects

The results of the public opinion survey published by IRI once again showed us the current situation in the Georgian political scene.

The trends recorded by the research have been highlighted for a long time, and they show what Georgian society wants, although it is difficult to say how things will develop in the near future.

A recently published study by the "International Republican Institute" (IRI) showed that Georgian society continues to strongly support the country's western orientation. 85% of respondents fully or more or less support Georgia's European aspirations. Among them, the support of 60% is unchanged even if this choice leads to the severance of trade relations with Russia.

Today, Georgia has a unique chance to take a big step towards the realization of the country's European aspirations - it must fulfill 12 requirements of the European Union and receive candidate status. Everyone knows this. But half of the respondents (50%) think that the country will not get this status in 2023.

55% of the respondents are of the opinion that Georgia can fulfill all 12 requirements for obtaining the status. If Georgia does not get the candidate status, according to 64% of respon-

dents, the government will be to blame. Only 8% would blame the opposition parties, and 6% would blame the European Union. These results indicate that in case of failure, it will be difficult for the government to blame the non-receipt of the status either on the opposition or on the EU.

"Georgian Dream" claims that it has developed a plan to fulfill 12 demands of the European Union and is working to fulfill them, but it is already clear that there is great dissatisfaction in the European Parliament regarding this fulfillment and they have a different vision than "Georgian Dream" of what deoligarchization means. They are dissatisfied with the attack on the free media and directly demand the release of Nika Melia, as well as the release of Mikheil Saakashvili and his transfer abroad for treatment.

The survey showed that the political field is polarized again. If there were parliamentary elections tomorrow, only two parties would overcome the current 5% parliament, the ruling "Georgian Dream" (25%) and the main opposition force - the "National Movement" (12%).

Then come two 3% parties

(former Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia and Zurab Girchi Japaridze) and six 2% parties (Giorgi Vashadze's "Strategy Aghmashenebeli", Elene Khoshtaria's "Droa", Labor Party, Anna Dolidze's Party, Girchi and Alliance of Patriots).

The 1% rating of several other parties, including "Lelo", is significant. The mentioned results of the research shows once again that in order to overcome the polarization of the political spectrum, it is important to lower the electoral threshold to 3 or 2%, which will allow many newly formed parties to enter their representatives in the parliament and continue the party building process.

The IRI research shows once again that the opposite spectrum as a whole has more supporters than the ruling "Georgian Dream".

Under conditions of a low electoral threshold, these parties could already think about creating a coalition in the parliament, but the 5% threshold forces the unification of small parties before the elections. Such a statement has already been made by Strategia Aghmashenebeli, Droa and Zurab Japaridze's Girchi.

If we look at the results of the IRI survey, the majority of respondents support the entry of multiple parties into the parliament. 48% of the surveyed citizens strongly agree that it is healthy for Georgia's democracy to have several parties in power, and another 26% somewhat agree with this opinion. It seems that the citizens believe that the presence of a party coalition in the government is a guarantee that the monopolies of any party will end and the threat of it taking over state institutions.

In general, citizens have a low level of trust in the existing parties. Only 15% of respondents express their trust in the parties, and 35% do not trust them. It should be noted that in March of this year, only 23% expressed distrust. 42% of respondents state that no party expresses their interests.

There is a large number of people who are dissatisfied with the top-rated parties. 33% of the surveyed citizens would not vote for National Movement under any circumstances, and 30% would not vote for the Georgian Dream under any circumstances. Along with expressing dissatisfaction with the existing

parties, 72% of respondents would like to see new political parties in the next elections.

Before each parliamentary election, several new parties are formed in Georgia, but it is difficult for them to overcome the 5% threshold. The society also wants to see more young people in politics. This point of view is confirmed by 79% of the respondents. The Georgian society is not clearly formed regarding early parliamentary elections, which the opposition traditionally demanded in the recent period. 34% of respondents unequivocally support it, and the same number unequivocally oppose it.

The survey also shows that the most acute problem facing Georgia has not disappeared. 71% of respondents said that the main problem facing the country is related to the economy and poverty.

The future development of Georgia depends on how the government overcomes economic problems, how much it manages to fulfill the 12 demands of the European Union, and how much the opposition spectrum manages to get out of the crisis and mobilize citizens for active action.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Opposition, NGOs and experts meet with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Czech Republic



The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, during the visit to Tbilisi, met with

the opposition, representatives of non-governmental organizations and experts working on European integration issues. The meeting was held at the Czech Embassy.

The representatives of the opposition did not talk about the details, although they noted that the main topic at the hearing was the 12 recommendations of the European Commission.

"We talked about the fact that, unfortunately, today, we do not see the will of the ruling power to implement the recommendations that were formulated by the European Commission. Today, the "Georgian dream" is on the path of our country's European integration, which does not allow the Georgian people to fulfill their historical dream of returning to the European family," said Badri Japaridze.

According to the executive director of ISFED, Nino Dolidze, the non-governmental sector highlighted the challenges in the direction of justice and de-oligarchy in the country.

"From our side, we focused on

justice, electoral reform, election of the ombudsman, de-oligarchization. We said that there are challenges, although there is still time to implement the recommendations. Our request was that although we have challenges, the only way is European integration and So to speak, we asked them for help," said Dolidze.

Council of Europe and European Parliament reach a preliminary agreement on non-recognition of Russian travel documents issued in Ukraine and Georgia

The leadership of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament reached a preliminary agreement on non-recognition of Russian travel documents issued in Ukraine and Georgia. Information was published on the website of the European Council.

The agreed text must be fi-

nally adopted by the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament before going through a formal approval procedure.

According to the information, this decision is a response to Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine, as well as the issuance of Russian passports to residents of the occupied territories, which Russia uses. Also on Russia's unilateral decision to unilaterally recognize the "independence" of Georgia's regions - Abkhazia and "South Ossetia".

Russian travel documents issued in the Russian-occupied regions of Ukraine or in the separatist territories of Georgia are not accepted for ob-

taining a visa or crossing the borders of the Schengen area.

It is also noted that the documents issued by the Russian occupation forces in these regions are not recognized in many member states, while the rest of the European countries are in the process of accepting such non-recognition.



Weather

Friday, November 11

Day Mostly Cloudy
High: 12°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 4°C

Saturday, November 12

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 16°C

Night Clear
Low: 4°C

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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

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On 28 October 2022, the State Ballet of Georgia opened the 2022/2023 ballet season with the world premiere of a contemporary ballet set to Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*. Artistic Director Nina Ananiashvili, choreographer Ilya Jivoy, the entire ballet company, and opera soloists celebrated at the Tbilisi Opera and Ballet Theatre with the Friends of the Georgian Ballet, who hosted a reception supported by Château Mukhrani and Teliani Valley.





