

## Foreign Relations Committees of Georgia and Netherlands hold joint hearing

By Liza Mchedlidze

The delegation of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Parliament of Georgia, led by Nikoloz Samkharadze, within a framework of the official visit to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, participated in the joint sessions of the Foreign Relations, Europe, NATO and Defense and Security Committees of the Dutch Parliament's Senate and Lower House.

According to the press service of the Parliament of Georgia, the topic of the held meeting was Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, recommendations issued by the EU for the candidacy status, etc.

According to their report, Nikoloz Samkharadze reviewed the security challenges in the region, the ongoing Russian aggression in Ukraine, the peace initiative in the South Caucasus, and the issue of granting Georgia the status of a candidate country for the European Union.

The chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee provided Dutch colleagues with detailed information about the state of implementation of EU recommenda-



tions by the Georgian authorities and called on them to support Georgia in this process. Dutch legislators reaffirmed their country's strong support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as for Georgia's European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

"I am glad that our visit to the Kingdom of the Netherlands has a special sig-

nificance. There is great interest in Georgia, which is evidenced by the fact that both chambers of the Parliament held hearings about Georgia, where I had the opportunity to talk about the steps taken by the Parliament to implement the 12 recommendations of the European Union and the ongoing processes in the country. Our Dutch colleagues have again con-

firmed their support for the process of Georgia's integration into the European Union, and I hope that next year they will support granting us candidate status. Representatives of the Dutch ruling coalition and the opposition were also present at the mentioned hearings, which is important in terms of mobilizing support," said Nikoloz Samkharadze.

## 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the diplomatic relations between Georgia and Azerbaijan celebratory events held in Baku

By Liza Mchedlidze

In celebration of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Georgia and the Republic of Azerbaijan, various events were held in Baku. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs released the information.

According to their reports, the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary was celebrated both at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan and at a special reception.

"As part of the anniversary event held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Ambassador of Georgia, Zurab Pataradze, held a meet-

ing with the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, Khalaf Khalafov. The sides reviewed the history of cooperation between the two friendly and strategic partner states in the modern era.

In addition, they emphasized the close and effective cooperation established between the countries in all fields. At the

event, it was noted that the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relations is only a short episode of the centuries-old history, during which good neighborliness, friendship and mutual respect were formed between the Georgian and Azerbaijani people.

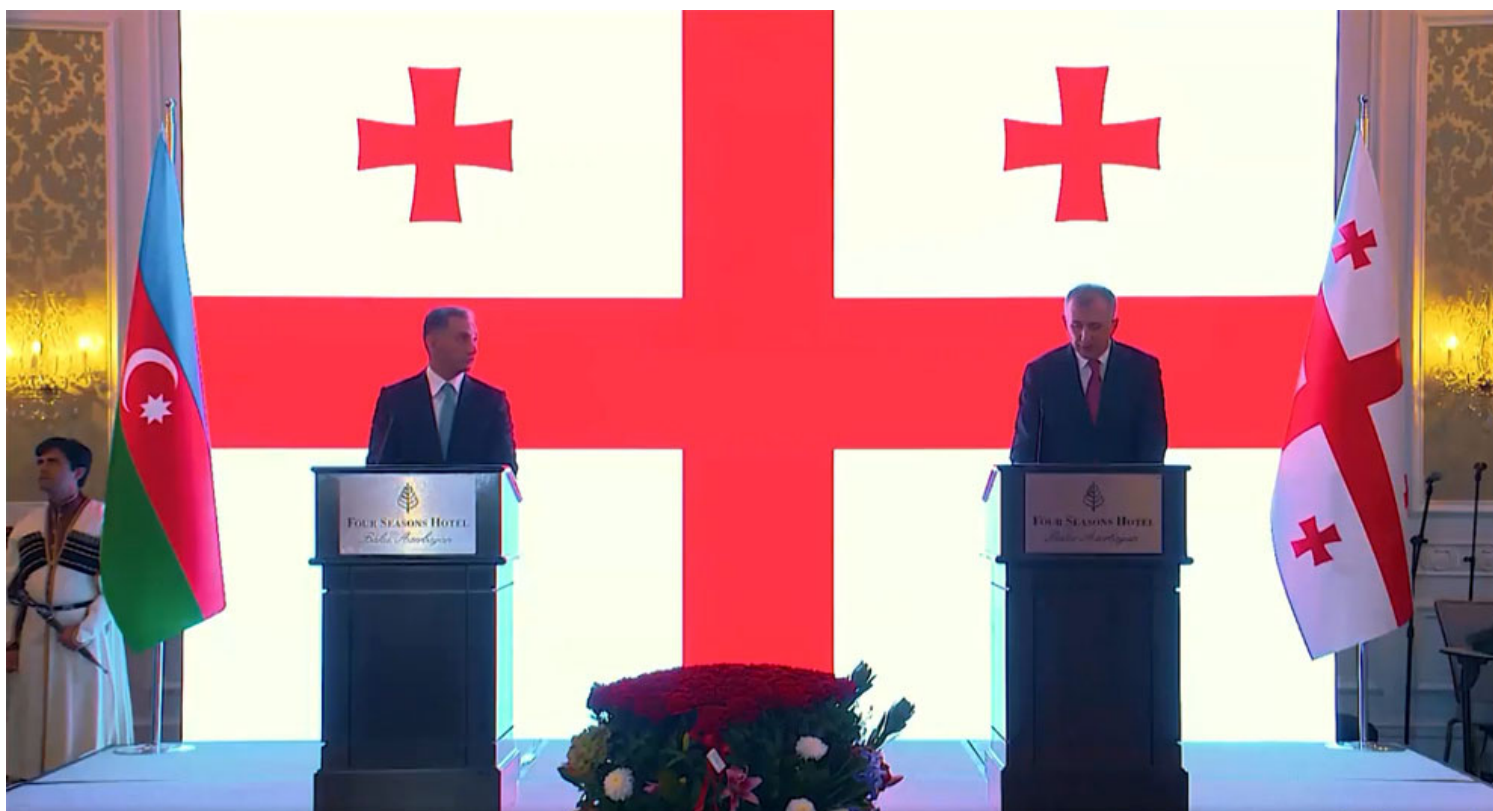
Within the framework of the event, it should be noted that a photo exhibition was organized, which reflected the history of diplomatic relations between Georgia and Azerbaijan.

Ambassador Zurab Pataradze addressed the public at the reception organized by the Embassy of Georgia at the Four Seasons Baku Hotel. The Georgian diplomat drew attention to the strategic partnership of Georgia-Azerbaijan, the achieved successes and set goals, and also emphasized the importance of the recent visit of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev to Georgia, and noted that this visit gave a positive impulse to the development of bilateral relations in political and trade-economic terms.

It should be noted that Pataradze spoke about the "neighborhood peaceful initiative" of the Prime Minister of Georgia, Iraklis Gharibashvili.

In addition, in the Heydar Aliyev Palace, with the support of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth of Georgia, a gala concert of the Georgian folk song and dance state academic ensemble "Erisioni" was held, which was attended by about 1700 people.

Among the attendees were representatives of the diplomatic corps and international organizations, the legislative and executive authorities of Azerbaijan, business circles, cultural mass media and the Georgian diaspora, as well as ordinary citizens," the statement reads.



# How will main opposition party overcome its internal crisis?

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

The United National Movement, which is the main opposition force, is facing serious internal problems. On November 9, a part of the party leaders demanded extraordinary elections of the party chairman and board, which turned out to be a surprise for the party leadership. Elections are expected to be held in December.

It is difficult to say whether the UNM will maintain its unity after this or not.

The 'hot political autumn', which some opposition leaders threatened the Georgian Dream with before going on vacation in the summer, did not happen, but the opposite did happen - the autumn actually passed 'quietly' without opposition speeches, the rating of the opposition parties is low, and the main opposition party, National Movement is actually on the verge of falling apart. Overall, the opposition cannot pose any serious threat to the ruling party anytime soon.

On November 9, a part of the National Movement members' request to hold internal elections in the party implies the election of the party's chairman, politi-

cal council, and political secretariat. Chairman of the UNM Nika Melia accepted this challenge and expressed his readiness to hold intra-party elections and participate in them.

Candidates with a claim for the chairmanship of the party appeared - Giorgi Mumladze and Levan Khabeishvili. Giorgi Chaladze applied for the chairmanship of the party but soon refused. They do not rule out that other candidates for the chairmanship of the party will also appear.

The form of internal party elections, which will be held electronically, is still unclear. A 7-member commission was created to organize the elections.

Why is part of the National Movement dissatisfied with the chairmanship of Nika Melia? Giorgi Mumladze talks about the mistakes made by Nika Melia, that the new people he brought in did not justify him, he was not able to implement the right policy, and his rating is low "The party is in second place, but the approval rating of the party chairman is 15<sup>th</sup> and he is ahead of 1% parties leaders...A leader's qualities, perseverance, and actions should support the rating

of the party and not the other way around - the party shouldn't have to be dragging the leader along."

The political opponents of this party and a number of experts are looking for another explanation for the controversy started in the UNM. According to them, Nika Melia has offended the old 'upper echelon' of the UNM with his actions, and Davit Kezerashvili and Vano Merabishvili are standing behind Levan Khabeishvili.

Accordingly, "there is a struggle for money and power in the party," - this is the conclusion.

The current chairman of the National Movement, Nika Melia, is going to participate in the re-election of the chairman of the party and declares that he will speak openly about a number of internal party issues, which he has refrained from making public until now.

Most likely, they will talk about Kezerashvili, with whom he does not have good relations. The parties involved in the internal party elections claim that the unity of the party should not be broken and that the party should become stronger after the

elections. But if the confrontation takes the character of mutual exposure, it will be very difficult to maintain unity in the party.

In addition, the controversy within the party will certainly affect its traditional supporters and may significantly reduce support for the National Movement.

Some commentators do not see a problem in the possible reduction of the support of the main opposition party, and on the contrary, if the National Movement disappears altogether, it will be good for Georgian politics, because the Georgian Dream will no longer be able to intimidate the voters - if you do not elect me, the UNM will return to power.

The position of the real leader of the "National Movement", Mikheil Saakashvili, is not entirely clear. All the contenders for the chairmanship involved in the internal party elections act on behalf of Saakashvili and promise to do everything to release him and take him abroad for treatment. However, as people who came to see Saakashvili say, the third president considers the election con-

trovercy within the party to be untimely and does not state his position.

The internal problems of the National Movement so far only weaken the opposition and cause disappointment among the opposition voters. Statements are made that "the opposition does not have any agenda, it will not have the power to change the government."

As for the traditional theme of the unification of the pro-Western opposition, this is only in its infancy, and there are three party applications for unification. Each has a low rating and a merger is unlikely to dramatically increase their support.

Some people blame the government for the dismal state of the opposition, which manages to create divisions and, probably, bribe some opposition leaders.

At the same time, many problems have accumulated in the country, and there is a great protest charge in the society, which appeared periodically when the citizens thought that the western orientation of the country was in danger. Non-fulfillment of 12 requirements of the European Union may become the reason for a new wave.

## The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

### Russia's State Duma approves document on socio-economic promotion of occupied Abkhazia

The State Duma of Russia ratified the agreement on state support for socio-economic development of occupied Abkhazia in 2022-2025 at the plenary session. The information was re-



leased by the Russian government media.

The Russian Cabinet of Ministers submitted the document for ratification on November 10, and the parties signed the agreement on August 4. The document regulates the issues of financial assistance for the implementation of the state program of social and economic development of Russia occupied Abkhazia.

The implementation of the agreement aims to fulfill the international obligations assumed

by the parties when concluding the agreement on alliance and strategic partnership. According to their explanation, it is not about obligations in

the fields of defense, security and law enforcement.

The agreement also defines the authorized bodies of the parties "on issues of interaction and assistance in the implementation

of the State Program of Socio-Economic Development of Abkhazia".

In addition, the agreement defines the procedure and conditions for co-financing of activities by Russia within the framework of the state program, as well as control measures and responsibility for non-fulfillment of financing conditions and non-fulfillment of the main target indicators of the implementation of state program activities.

### Parliament of Georgia writes to Venice Commission regarding Ukrainian law on 'de-oligarchization'

The Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia, Shalva Papuashvili, stated that the Parliament of Georgia has written to the Venice Commission to find out the status of the law on de-oligarchization of Ukraine, since the Georgia's draft law on 'de-oligarchization' is an analogue of Ukrainian one.

Papuashvili stated that the US ambassador made "a confus-

ing statement" from which 'radical' opposition is 'profiting from, and no one officially refused to discuss the law:

"Unfortunately, the confusing statement of the US ambassador yesterday caused a stir in the radical opposition. It is unfortunate that confusing statements are made regarding such substantive issues. We have seen a response from the European

Commission yesterday to find out what the status of this project is, and we are waiting for an official response.

It is a fact that no one has officially refused to review the Ukrainian law, also, we have not received such information from the EU representatives. Maybe [the ambassador] had the wrong information. It is important that such confusing state-

ments are not made in this process, because only radical groups benefit from this," he said.

US Ambassador to Georgia Kelly Degan said on November 22 that "the law that was drafted by Ukraine and forwarded to the Venice Commission



Council that this project is still being discussed. In addition, my cabinet also wrote to the Venice

has since been withdrawn and is not awaiting a conclusion at this stage."

## Weather

Thursday, November 24

Day ☀️ Clear

High: 16°C

Night 🌧️ Partly Cloudy

Low: 6°C

Friday, November 25

Day 🌧️ Partly Cloudy

High: 16°C

Night 🌧️ Mostly Cloudy

Low: 8°C

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