

Mikheil Sarjveladze Neither Excludes nor Confirms Parliament to Have Candidate for Ombudsman

By LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Mikheil Sarjveladze, Chairman of the Human Rights Protection Committee of the Parliament of Georgia, told the media that comparing positions for the best model for electing the Public Defender is still underway. He added that he does not have any information that the consultation for the selection of the Public Defender is currently underway.

According to him, political consultations should be effective. As Sarjveladze said the most important thing for the 'Georgian Dream' now is to be less dependent on the 'conscientiousness' of the opposition.

"We need to focus on the result. Moreover, it is required by the 12 recommendations of the European Commission. Beyond that, it is important for the country that the Public Defender's Institute works properly and that it has a Public Defender elected for six years. Political consultations should be effective and if we entrust this process only to the opposition and their conscientiousness, unfortunately, there was not enough conscientiousness in the votes. Therefore, we will have to conduct the process in a different way. Consultations will show how it will be otherwise. It will be seen what the perspective can be in order to choose a public defender. I do not have any information that the consultation for the selection of the



Public Defender is currently underway.

I can neither exclude nor confirm that we will have a candidate. Positions are being compared, what will be the best model. It is very important not to have any hindering factors, which meant the impossibility of allowing a compromise on the

part of the opposition. At some point, an ultimatum was issued, and unfortunately, the party issuing the ultimatum was held hostage. Due to the arguments, the candidates named by them could not be impartial.

The previous attempt was unsuccessful and the opposition will also be cautious in issuing

such ultimatums, as it was clearly felt that many opposition members were prevented from making a decision because they had given harsh ultimatums. We cannot invent a new bicycle when selecting a public defender. We need a qualified staff with an orderly system of values. "Impartiality is no less important,

which implies political impartiality," said Sarjveladze.

On December 22, 2022, the Parliament rejected all candidates for the position of Public Defender. The reason was the decision of the ruling team, Georgian Dream, not to support the presented candidates.

Russia Supports Restoration of Air Traffic Between Russia and Georgia, Does not Rule Out Easing Visa Regulations

By LIZA MCHEDLIDZE



The Deputy Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Russian Duma, Dmitry Novikov, said that he supports the restoration of air traffic between Russia and Georgia. Novikov did not rule out easing the visa regime for Georgian citizens either.

"Despite the difficult period that the Russian Federation has gone through with the Georgian authorities, there are many citizens living in this country who are friendly towards Russia and support friendly relations between our peoples. Therefore, I would certainly support the restoration of aviation communications.

As for visas, I would consider the situation in the same way. Although here in this case it is necessary to study all the pros and cons more carefully. But I

do not rule out that in the near future it will be worth easing the visa regime significantly," Novikov told the Russian media.

Also, according to Russian media, the Russian Association of Lawyers in the field of human rights appealed to the President of Russia and the Minister of Foreign Affairs to ease the visa regime for Georgian citizens. According to the association, the majority of Georgian citizens are in favor of friendship with Russia, and here "the group of nationalists is only slightly represented."

"The cancellation of the visa regime for Georgian citizens entering Russia, as well as the restoration of direct flights, can be a worthy response to those who do not want stable and peaceful relations between Russia and

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.6583; Euro - 2.8585; GBP - 3.2410; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.6025; Swiss Franc - 2.8923

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Georgia,” the association said in a statement.
The conversation about the

restoration of air traffic between Russia and Georgia was resumed after the comments of the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov. Lavrov praised

the Georgian government for ‘withstanding’ Western pressure to join sanctions against Russia, and expressed hope that direct flights would be restored soon.

In response to Lavrov, the chairman of the ruling party Georgian Dream Irakli Kobakhidze said that the restoration of air traffic will ease the

situation of Georgian citizens and is welcome and the President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili criticized the possible restoration of the flight.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Robin Dunnigan Nominated as US Ambassador to Georgia by Joe Biden



The President of the United States of America, Joe Biden, nominated Robin Dunnigan for the position of Ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to Georgia.

Robin Dunnigan is currently the Deputy Assistant Secretary responsible for Central and Eastern Europe in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs.

Prior to that, Dunnigan served as the US Ambassador-at-Large, Chargé d’Affaires and Deputy Chief of Mission in Vienna, Austria. She was Deputy Assis-

tant Secretary at the Bureau of Energy Resources.

Robin Dunnigan has worked at US embassies in Vietnam, Chile, Turkey, Cuba and El Salvador and is the recipient of numerous State Department awards.

Robin Dunnigan will replace Kelly Degnan, who has been serving as US Ambassador to Georgia since 2020.

Davit Usupashvili: More Resolutions Mentioning Bidzina Ivanishvili and Georgia in General is Inevitable

Lelo MP Davit Usupashvili responded to the planned vote on the resolution related to Mikheil Saakashvili in the European Parliament on February 15 and said

that that more resolutions mentioning Bidzina Ivanishvili and Georgia in general will be coming, adding that this process is ‘inevitable’.



As he noted, the democratic world sees that politicians are busy with the prosecution in Georgia, adding that the worse Saakashvili’s condition gets, the ‘happier’ they are.

“What we see in the country is seen even better by the outside eye, those people evaluate us in accordance with the standards, the whole democratic world

sees that the highest representatives of the government in Georgia, the leaders of the Georgian Dream are busy with the prosecutor’s office, not politics, they limit

who should go where. They decide whether he should be in prison or outside, and they are busy with paying revenge. As they see him in a worse condition, they are happy and radiate feelings of satisfaction, all this will be translated into many resolution projects and resolutions,” Davit Usupashvili said.

ADB Supports Georgia’s Capital Market with Subscription to Country’s First Certified Gender Bond

TBILISI, GEORGIA (13 February 2023) — The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has invested GEL18.75 million (approximately \$7 million) in a 2-year local currency gender bond issuance by Joint Stock Company Microfinance Organization Crystal (Crystal), the largest

microfinance institution (MFI) in Georgia. It is the first certified gender bond issuance in the South Caucasus and in the Georgian Stock Exchange.

The proceeds will finance women-owned micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (WMSMEs). The total bond issuance amounts to GEL 25 million with ADB as the anchor investor and the Bank of Georgia as co-investor with a subscription of GEL 6.25 million. Gender bonds are social bonds issued to enhance gender equality and women’s empowerment. Crystal’s gender bond framework received a second party opinion to certify its compliance with the Social Bond Principles of the International Capital Market Association.

“Local currency bonds bridge financing gaps that prevent developing countries from achieving sustainable and inclusive growth, and support sound capital management by the private sector,” said ADB Private Sector Operations Department Director General Suzanne Gaboury. “This pioneering transaction will also help deepen Georgia’s capital market by raising awareness about thematic bonds aligned to best international standards while supporting improved access to finance for WMSMEs.”

Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises play a critical role in Georgia’s economy, accounting for most private firms and providing more than half of all jobs, but their growth is con-

strained by a lack of access to finance. Women in particular are disproportionately affected due to high collateral requirements and other cultural biases that hamper asset ownership. MFIs play an important role in providing access to finance to low-income borrowers particularly in remote rural areas, which traditional commercial banks are generally reluctant to serve.

“Crystal has always been an active supporter of the sustainable financing and small entrepreneurs, and our efforts have been recognized by numerous corporate awards and investment deals,” stated Crystal’s Chief Executive Officer Ilia Revia. “This transaction demonstrates that ADB and Crystal share a com-

mitment to improving access to finance for women entrepreneurs in Georgia, which will ultimately contribute to the country’s economic development.”

Crystal is the leading financial inclusion organization and the largest non-banking financial institution in Georgia. It manages a loan portfolio of GEL 400 million, employing more than 1,000 staff, and operating through 50 branches serving more than 130,000 customers across Georgia.

ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. Established in 1966, it is owned by 68 members—49 from the region.

Weather

Wednesday, February 15

Day Mostly Cloudy
High: 6°C

Night Partly Cloud
Low: -3°C

Thursday, February 16

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 3°C

Night Mostly Cloudy
Low: -4°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

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