

## Irakli Kobakhidze Attributes Georgia's Failure to Obtain EU Candidacy Status to Global War Party

By Liza Mchedlidze

Irakli Kobakhidze, the chairman of the Georgian Dream party, discussed Georgia's unsuccessful bid for candidate status in the European Union in 2022. He expressed his belief that the Global War Party holds significant influence over the European Union, which ultimately hindered Georgia's candidacy. However, Kobakhidze refrained from providing specific details about the members or entities comprising the Global War Party.

"Why it's easy for a global war party to influence the EU: When a decision is made on the status of a candidate, full consensus is required. Just one opposing vote out of the 27 countries is enough to prevent the candidate from being granted status. This highlights how easily the global war party can exert its influence," stated Kobakhidze during his appearance on Public Broadcaster.

He declined to disclose the identity of those associated with

the Global War Party and emphasized that the failure to obtain the status was not a result of the European Union's influence, but rather attributed it to this party.

"I won't name it, I can't name it because I don't want to create awkwardness. [...] We cannot solely hold the European Union responsible for this as their decision-making process is delicate. Even the removal of just one out of the 27 countries is insufficient for the candidate to receive the status. While we cannot blame the European Union, we can attribute the influence on the European Union to the Global War Party," stated Kobakhidze.

According to Kobakhidze, he can identify "4-5 countries that the global war party can withdraw support from in a single day." Therefore, he believes that whether Georgia will receive the candidate status this year will depend on the political context.

"Their main goal in June last year was to change the situation here - revolution and then the



second front, if they see that they will not be able to change the situation in December, to

change the government and the second front, in this case the chance of getting the candidate

status increases," said Kobakhidze.

## President of Georgia Emphasizes Alternative Approaches and Responsible Action in Saakashvili Case



By Liza Mchedlidze

During an interview with Ukrainskaya Pravda, President Salome Zourabichvili expressed that while Georgians are humane and tolerant, there

is a prevailing sentiment among the population that Saakashvili should be held accountable for certain crimes committed during his regime.

The journalist highlighted that Mikheil Saakashvili is a

Ukrainian citizen, and President Volodymyr Zelensky has made multiple requests to the Georgian authorities for his return to Ukraine. When asked about her refusal to pardon Mikheil Saakashvili and whether she

faces any external pressure regarding this matter, Salome Zourabichvili emphasized that her primary responsibility is to the Georgian people.

Zourabichvili emphasized her responsibility to the Georgian people and the need to find a solution that upholds their sentiments while treating Saakashvili with dignity. Although there hasn't been an extradition request, Zourabichvili is actively working with the diplomatic community and European connections to explore potential solutions. She expressed disappointment at the government's lack of response and underlined their responsibility to address the situation. President Zourabichvili also emphasized that there has been no extradition request regarding Mikheil Saakashvili.

"As the president, I have to take into account what the Georgian people feel. Georgian people went through nine years of Saakashvili's regime, which left many victims. This is an issue that still divides the population of Georgia. It is not the case that the Georgian people believe that Saakashvili is not guilty. They may have disagreed that he may not have been treated the way a president should be treated. Georgians are very humane, very tolerant, but the feeling of the population is that Saakashvili should pay for some of the crimes committed during his regime - maybe

not by him personally, but under his leadership. This is the feeling in general. At the same time, there is a feeling that it is necessary to treat him with dignity and find a solution. I note that there was no extradition request. All this is the responsibility of the government. Pardoning is a moral issue for which I am responsible to people who are different. However, I am working with the diplomatic community, with my connections in Europe, and I am trying to work with the authorities to find a solution that is more in line with how the former president should be treated. Unfortunately, there has been no response from the government yet. They can respond to an extradition request in different ways, but they must react. They are responsible for this decision," said Salome Zourabichvili.

When asked about the potential impact of the Saakashvili issue on the friendship between Ukraine and Georgia, the President of Georgia emphasized that the relations between the two countries transcend this particular issue.

"I hope not, and I think not. I believe that our relations are above that. This is a very serious matter because it concerns the former president, although I will say again that the first judge in this matter is the

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Georgian people who went through those years. From outside the country, it is always very difficult to judge how this or that regime affected or did not affect the population. So this is

probably something to consider as well. I am sure that we will be able to find a way out of this situation," said Zurabishvili.

To the question whether or not The President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky personally approached her to pardon

Saakashvili, Zourabichvili stated that numerous individuals have approached her with this request.

The President explained that pardoning Saakashvili is not a suitable solution due to the sentiments of the Georgian people. Instead, she emphasized the

need to explore other options and apply pressure where responsibility lies and where change can be made. The government, according to her, should find more relevant approaches, mentioning the use of electronic bracelets. She acknowledged that the issue

is not unique and that many presidents in different countries have faced similar trials. However, she emphasized the importance of adhering to generally accepted approaches in resolving such difficulties.

### The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

#### EU Expects Georgia to Address Excessive Influence on Political and Public Life, Says Pawel Herczynski



According to Pawel Herczynski, the EU Ambassador to Georgia, de-oligarchization is recognized as one of the 12 key priorities. Specifically, it holds the fifth position among these priorities, and it was unanimously agreed upon by all 27 EU member states at the highest level, with the participation of heads of state and government, in the previous year.

According to the ambassador,

the European Union has an expectation that Georgia will address the issue of excessive influence on political and public life.

Herczynski highlighted that the problem of oligarchic influence is not exclusive to Georgia but also prevalent in other countries, particularly former Soviet nations. The Venice Commission has expressed concerns about the approach taken by Georgia's ruling majority in the 'Deoligarchization Bill', emphasizing the associated risks.

The Ambassador called for a systemic approach, as recommended by the Venice Commission, to strengthen Georgia's state institutions. This includes promoting accountability, transparency, fair financing of political campaigns and elections, safeguarding media freedom, reforming the justice system, and combating corruption at the

highest levels. The ultimate aim is to create an environment where wealthy individuals cannot exert undue influence on public and political life.

The EU Ambassador stated that the European Union is committed to supporting Georgia with its expertise and experts, based on the chosen path of the country's political elite.

"This is not only a problem of Georgia, but it is a problem of many other countries, especially in former Soviet countries. The Venice Commission has made it very clear that the approach chosen by the ruling majority, namely in the 'Deoligarchization Bill', is not the right approach, there are many risks. That is why we expect a systematic approach, as the Venice Commission said. A systemic approach means many different things. This should be done to strengthen the state institutions of Georgia. It concerns accountability, transparency, financing of political campaigns, financing of elections, freedom of media, reform of justice, and fighting against corruption at the highest level. So the whole environment should be created so that

rich people do not have influence on public and political life. We, the European Union, are here to help you with our expertise, experts, whatever path the political elite in Georgia chooses," Herczynski said.

#### Kobakhidze Condemns Diplomats 'Encouraging' Polarization in Georgia



"A particular diplomat directly promoted the use of disrespectful and vulgar language and encouraged polarization," responded Irakli Kobakhidze, Chairman of the "Georgian Dream" party, regarding the protest carried out by citizens in front of the parliament on June 2. The protesters displayed banners with inscriptions

such as 'Irakli Russian', and "Call Him whatever you want," among others.

According to Kobakhidze, it is fundamentally unacceptable for them when specific diplomats in Georgia encourage polarization.

"At the time, the same group, referred to as these so-called stubborn people, organized a provocation in front of the parliament building, holding banners containing profanity. This incident was justified as freedom of expression by a particular diplomat, who directly encouraged hate speech, profanity, and polarization.

It appears that certain individuals, these stubborn people, interpreted this as a green light and organized another provocation in recent days. For us, it is fundamentally unacceptable when specific diplomats encourage polarization in Georgia. They should address the growing polarization within their own country. Let them not exacerbate polarization with us," said Kobakhidze.

## CAREC Senior Officials Gather in Tbilisi to Review Progress and Foster Regional Cooperation

Tbilisi, Georgia — Representatives from Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Program member countries reviewed the progress made in CAREC 2030 Strategy clusters during the 2022-23 period at the annual Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) held in Tbilisi, Georgia, on 13-14 June 2023.

Officials discussed the theme for the 2023 Ministerial Conference and plans for preparing the CAREC Climate Vision, a forward-looking framework outlining the member countries' strategic objectives and measures to



address climate change in the region. The CAREC Climate Vision foresees a region that is resilient to climate risks, committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and actively engaged in transitioning towards a low-carbon economy.

The meeting also discussed plans for establishment of the

CAREC Climate and Sustainability Project Preparatory Fund: a multi-donor trust fund which aims to support CAREC governments in project preparation and readiness in a climate change responsive and sustainable manner.

High-level representatives from CAREC member countries,

including Azerbaijan, Georgia, the People's Republic of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, participated in the SOM. The meeting served as a platform to underscore CAREC's commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainable development.

"The CAREC region has a great opportunity to lead the way in the global transition to a green economy," said Ms. Xiaohong Yang, Deputy Director General, Central and West Asia Department (CWRD), ADB. "Regional cooperation will be essential for the CAREC region to successfully transition to a green economy. The CAREC region can share knowledge and experience, pool resources, and coordinate policies to accelerate the transi-

tion to a green economy."

She also thanked Mr. Genadi Arveladze, Georgia's deputy minister of economy and sustainable development and CAREC National Focal Point, for hosting CAREC activities in 2023. "Georgia has played an invaluable role in facilitating CAREC and in shaping the deliverables for this year, and we sincerely appreciate your deep commitment to regional cooperation," she said.

The CAREC Program is a collaborative initiative of countries and development partners in Central Asia, South Caucasus, and South and East Asia to promote economic growth and poverty reduction in Central Asia. CAREC 2030 serves as a long-term strategic framework to connect people, policies, and projects for shared and sustainable development in the region.

### Weather

Friday, June 16

Day Partly Cloudy  
High: 28°C

Night T-storm  
Low: 17°C

Saturday, June 17

Day Partly Cloudy  
High: 31°C

Night Partly Cloudy  
Low: 18°C

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