

President Salome Zourabichvili Calls for More Recognition and Support from the United States

By Liza Mchedlidze

In an interview with the CBS NEWS program 60 Minutes, President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili stated that the war in Ukraine serves as a reminder of Georgia's past experiences, confirming the existence of a perpetual direct threat from Russia. She stated that Russia is 'testing the ground' and their current preferred aggression in Georgia is hybrid war.

President Zourabichvili addressed the presence of Russians who have settled in Georgia since the Ukraine war began. She expressed concern, stating, "It's very unnerving when in your own country you have people that are talking the language of the enemy. And they believe that they're at home."

"They're behaving and believing that they are very much at home. So there is a fine line. And that line has to be kept so that we do not have incidents in the future that would allow Russia to use their favorite doctrine of protecting Russian-speaking citizens," Zourabichvili said.

In a CBS interview, Zourabichvili expressed her desire for more recognition and support from the United States, particularly in relation to Georgia's candidate status within the European Union. She feels that such recognition from the highest levels of the U.S. government would be significant for the people of Georgia.

She emphasized that if Georgia is denied the European Union



candidacy status, it will be a great victory for Russia.

Sharyn Alfonsi (Interviewer): This is a critical time. Do you feel like the West, particularly the U.S., has been responsive enough and supportive enough of Georgia in this moment?

President Salome Zourabichvili: I don't think so. And I will take one concrete ex-

ample. I've been a president now for five years. And I've not managed—to have any form of meeting at my level, which would be the president or the vice president even through a phone call.— I understand that there are more urgent issues. But I think that some more public recognition is needed.

Sharyn Alfonsi (Interviewer): Recognition of?
President Salome

Zourabichvili: Of the fact that the United States is supporting our candidate status within the European Union. I know that is the language that the U.S. has with our European partners, but that being repeated by the highest level would be meaningful for the Georgian population.

The EU has laid out a list of requirements for Georgia to become a candidate for membership. The conditions include

tackling corruption and lessening the economic and political influence of domestic oligarchs. A decision is expected by the end of the year.

Sharyn Alfonsi (Interviewer): What happens to Georgia if the EU denies the bid?

President Salome Zourabichvili: It will be a big victory for Russia." an excerpt from the CBS interview reads.

Irakli Kobakhidze Criticizes Salome Zourabichvili in Response to President's CBS Interview



By Liza Mchedlidze

Irakli Kobakhidze, chairman of Georgian Dream, in response to statements made by President Salome Zourabichvili during her CBS interview, stated after the majority meeting that questioning the prime minister's motivation for European integration amounts to direct 'agitation' against the EU candidacy status.

"When the president visits Europe and discusses with her European partners whether the prime minister desires or opposes the country's integration into Europe, it directly implies that Salome Zourabichvili, along with other radical politicians, is involved in anti-status agitation. Her television address also qualifies as anti-status agitation. Questioning the prime minister's motivations for European integration constitutes direct agitation against the status," remarked Kobakhidze.

The Chairman stated that President Zourabichvili is 'for-

mally' the president of Georgia but, in fact, he believes she is the president of the opposition party United National Movement.

"For us, she is no longer the president of Georgia. She is only formally the president of Georgia, but in fact, she is the president of the 'United National Movement.' You have seen, even today during her television appearance, what her spirit is, what her messages are. She goes to Europe to campaign against candidate status. When you go to Europe and talk to your colleagues about the fact that the current government of Georgia does not want European integration, this, of course, means agitating against the candidacy status. How can you let such a person go to Europe when you want her to get the status of a candidate?" Kobakhidze said.

'Georgian Dream' Chairman expressed the belief that Salome Zourabichvili, who has one year left in her presidential term, is

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Irakli Kobakhidze Criticizes Salome Zourabichvili in Response to President's CBS Interview

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recognition.

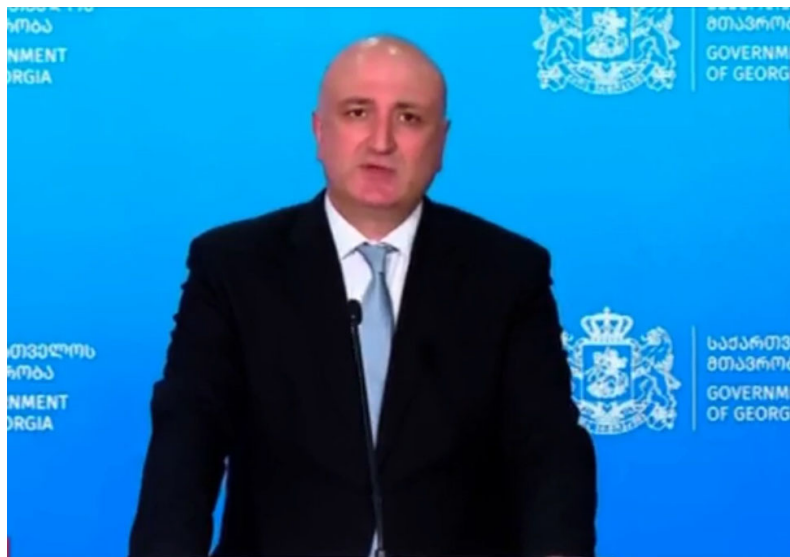
‘no longer relevant’ in influencing the country’s direction. According to Kobakhidze, despite her remaining time in office, Zourabichvili will not cause harm to the nation nor will she be able to prevent Georgia from attaining the status of a candidate for a particular program or

Irakli Kobakhidze added that there are strong, optimistic expectations that Georgia will be granted EU candidate status in December. He mentioned a significant shift in the chances, indicating that previously it was seen as a 50/50 possibility, but now the prospects have ‘greatly’ improved.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Government to Fund Oncological Surgery for All Cancer Patients



According to the amendment approved by the Government of Georgia, the press service reports that funding for chemo-hormonal-radiation therapies, medicines, and oncological surgery will be equally available to all citizens.

As per reports from the government meeting, a project was discussed to finance oncological

surgeries, including both planned and emergency procedures, for all cancer patients throughout the country, except for those covered by budgetary insurance. This coverage ex-

tends to insured veterans and patients with an annual income surpassing 40,000 GEL.

“Starting from August of the current year, hormone therapy, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, and medications have been funded for all oncology patients nationwide. Today, as per the amendment approved by the

Government of Georgia, financing for chemo/hormone/radiation therapies, medications, and oncological surgery will be equally accessible to all citizens.

As per the decision mentioned, the treatment of oncological diseases will be equally accessible to every beneficiary within the framework of the universal health care program, regardless of their income,” the statement reads.

Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili Meets with Czech Ambassador to Georgia Petr Kubernát

The Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Gharibashvili, met with Petr Kubernát, the Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Georgia. According to the Prime Minister’s press service, discussions regarding the relations between the Czech Republic and Georgia and the future perspectives of cooperation took place during the introductory meeting.

“The head of the government congratulated the new ambassador on his appointment and wished him success in his future

work. The press service of the Prime Minister emphasized Georgia’s foreign policy priorities and noted the Czech Republic’s

and expressed hope that Georgia’s efforts will be accurately reflected in the report by the European Commission. Further-



strong support for Georgia’s sovereignty, territorial integrity, as well as its European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

According to their reports, the meeting discussed the steps taken by the Government of Georgia in order to fulfill the 12 recommendations of the European Union.

“The Prime Minister emphasized the importance of granting candidate status to our country

more, the Prime Minister expressed the expectation that the European Commission will recommend granting candidate status to Georgia.

At the meeting, the emphasis was placed on the necessity of deepening trade and economic contacts between the countries, highlighting the readiness of both sides to work in this direction,” the statement reads.



Statement of the United Nations in Georgia regarding the draft laws on amendments to the Tobacco Control Law

The UN in Georgia maintains that the draft laws initiated in the Georgian Parliament on October 16, 2023 is damaging to public health. The proposed changes seek to exclude heated tobacco products from standardized packaging regulations, extend the sale of tobacco products with old packaging for another eight months, and modify the requirement to display brand

and variant information in the state language of Georgia, by allowing also display in English.

Protecting public health and effective tobacco control policy are paramount. Governments must act to protect public health policies from tobacco industry interference as per Art. 5.3 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. Allowing these changes would prioritize the financial interests of tobacco companies over the interest of public health.

Almost one-third of adults and a substantial portion of adolescents and young people in Georgia are using tobacco. Tobacco-related direct healthcare costs

and indirect costs due to premature mortality and disability and workplace costs exceed 800 million GEL annually, with the number of deaths surpassing 11,000¹⁾. Addressing this situation necessitates long-term and steadfast implementation of comprehensive and effective tobacco control policies. Georgia took a positive step with the adoption of strong tobacco control legislation in 2017, which yielded initial results through effective implementation. However, to achieve a sustained reduction in tobacco use rates and mitigate its catastrophic impact, full implementation and further strengthening of tobacco control

legislation and state policies are required.

Standardized packaging regulations under the new tobacco control legislation were originally intended to take effect on January 1, 2018, then unfortunately postponed to December 31, 2022, and subsequently extended once more to July 1, 2024. This delay and other proposed changes are unjustifiable and further delays the demonstrable benefits that plain packaging provides.

As of today, many countries in Europe and globally have demonstrated that plain packaging is an effective tobacco control measure. It reduces the appeal of to-

bacco products, enhances the impact of health warnings, diminishes consumer deception, and ultimately reduces tobacco consumption rates.

We urge the Parliament of Georgia to reject the proposed changes and we hope that it will continue the policy announced at the highest level in the field of health protection and tobacco control, protect the legislation from the interests of the tobacco industry, including the implementation of standardized packaging of tobacco products.

¹⁾ UNDP/WHO/NCDC Tobacco Control Investment Case study, 2017

Weather

Tuesday, October 31

Day ☀ Clear
High: 21°C

Night 🌙 Clear
Low: 11°C

Wednesday, November 1

Day ☀ Clear
High: 23°C

Night 🌧 Partly Cloudy
Low: 12°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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