

Georgian Prime Minister Gharibashvili Meets with EU Ambassador Pawel Herczyński and Member State Representatives

By Liza Mchedlidze

Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Gharibashvili, held a working lunch with H.E. Pawel Herczyński, the Ambassador of the European Union to Georgia, and ambassadors from EU member states.

According to the government administration, the meeting was initiated by the EU ambassadors. The discussions primarily centered around the European Commission's recommendation regarding the granting of candidate status to Georgia.

The ambassadors took the opportunity to congratulate the Prime Minister on the European Commission's recommendation to grant Georgia the status of a candidate for EU membership.

"The Prime Minister emphasized the historical importance of the mentioned recommendation and thanked the diplomatic corps for its support.

The meeting summarized the successful reforms carried out by the government and the progress Georgia has made on the path of integration into the European Union.

As noted by the Prime Minister, the management team successfully implemented almost all the recommendations determined by the European Commission in a short period. The government affirmed its readiness to continue the active process of reforms.



The head of the government expressed hope that, in accordance with the recommendation of the European Commission, the country will receive the candidate status in December. In this process, he

emphasized the support of the EU member states and stated that the Georgian authorities would maintain constant dialogue and close coordination with their European colleagues.

The meeting with the ambassadors was attended by Minister of Foreign Affairs Iliia Darchiashvili and Head of the Government Administration Revaz Javelidze," the statement reads.

German Ambassador Peter Fischer Encourages Georgia to Further Pursue EU Integration Efforts

By Liza Mchedlidze

German Ambassador to Georgia H.E. Peter Fischer in an interview with IPN discussed the European Commission's recommendation for Georgia's EU membership candidate status. He expressed opti-

mism and emphasized the importance of Georgia continuing its efforts, especially in areas related to democracy and the rule of law. The ambassador underscored the significance of these values in the European Union and stressed that new members will not receive concessions, particularly in the area

of democratic principles and institutions.

The interview also highlighted the protection the European Union offers against geopolitical risks and challenges to democratic values globally. Ambassador Fischer expressed Germany's support for Georgia's

EU membership and provided insights into the next steps in the accession process.

Fischer expressed a positive sentiment toward the European Commission's recommendation for Georgia's EU membership candidate status. He emphasized that if the Commission makes such a recommendation, it is a very good sign. Ambassador Fischer then spoke on behalf of Germany, stating that they wanted to say 'yes' to enlarging the European Union.

"If the Commission recommends, that's a very good sign. I can say for Germany, we want to say 'yes'. We want to enlarge the Union because the European Union is our protection against a world full of risks. Geopolitical risks: We've seen the aggression of Russia against Ukraine, but potentially also against other countries. We see violence in the Middle East. We see a lot of big challenges for the international community. We also see challenges to our way of living, which is in freedom, where the citizens have freedom rights, where we enjoy democracy, where we live by the rule of law, not by the rule of force. The European Union protects us from all that. The more countries are with us, the better this protection is.

At the same time, those countries that will join will also have this protection. We are there to protect each other," Fischer said.

The German Ambassador to Georgia also spoke about the nine areas that the European Commission has identified where Georgia needs to continue its efforts. He emphasized the significance of Georgia persistently working towards European integration. The ambassador stressed the importance of Georgia sending positive signals and not regressing in any of the nine mentioned areas before the decision in December.

"It's important to keep in mind that the decision will only be in December. But I am very optimistic. The Commission also named nine areas where Georgia should continue working. And it's very important that Georgia continue working, moving towards Europe, and until December does not send any opposite signals to us. The signal has to be, yes, we will continue working. The signal should not be that we are going backward in any of the nine mentioned areas. And I said that the EU is our protection, but also the protection for our way of life, freedom, democracy, rule of law. And since it's our protection, and since there is a challenge to those values coming from the world, from a number of states that think it's better to rule from above and just give the command, and the people should do what the rulers say, rather than

CONTINUED ON Page 2



Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.6981; Euro - 2.8932; GBP - 3.3160; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.9581; Swiss Franc - 2.9932

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CONTINUED FROM Page 1

letting the people decide and telling the government what to do:

We will not give any discount to any potential new members, especially in the area of democracy and rule of law institutions.

That's a very important issue for us. We have the recommendation. In December, we will have a decision. I'm optimistic and I

would like it to be yes. Germany would like it to be yes. The next step will be to open negotiations. Then we have 220,000 pages of legal text, the so-called Acquis, which means the full body of European legislation and standards that new members have to

adopt. The first negotiating chapter to be opened and the last to be closed are always the two chapters on democracy and rule of law institutions. So that's a very fundamental point and it's really worth it to emphasize that," the German Ambassador said.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Irakli Kobakhidze Attributes Killing of Georgian Citizen by Russian Occupying Forces to UNM's 'Provocations'



According to Irakli Kobakhidze, the killing of Georgian citizen Tamaz Ginturi by the Russian occupying forces in Kirbali is 'the final result of the provocations of the United National Movement.

Kobakhidze stated that what happened in Kirbali is a miniature model of what the United National Movement wants on a larger scale. According to Kobakhidze, the UNM aims to 'arrange significant provocations for the second front.'

"We strictly call on the United National Movement to refrain from provocations. Remember the provocation regarding Kirbali; the ultimate result of this incident was that aggressors killed one of our citizens. This serves as a miniature model of what they desire on a larger scale. With more significant provocations, their aim is to escalate to the second front. What happened in Kirbali is a small-scale representation of their intentions. One provocation, then another, and another – a man has died; aggressors killed one of our citizens. We urge everyone to refrain from provocations.

Anyway, why did it happen that four provocations were organized in a row, resulting in a man's death? Who were the aggressors? Why did it happen?

Among them, your television stations were involved in these provocations," Kobakhidze told journalists.

On November 6, Russian occupation forces killed Tamaz Ginturi, a Georgian citizen, near the village of Kirbali, and kidnapped Levan Dotiashvili.

President's Administration Clarifies that Zourabichvili's Statement didn't Pertain to Xi Jinping

Natia Sulava, the head of the administration of the President of Georgia, met with the Chinese ambassador. She clarified to the ambassador that in the interview President Zourabichvili gave to LCI, her response did not, in any way, allude to the relations between Georgia and China or, specifically, to the President of the People's Republic of China.

"At the meeting held in the Orbeliani Palace, the head of the presidential administration stated that in the interview

with the TV company LCI, President Salome Zourabichvili's response contained no reference to the relations between Georgia and China, or specifically,



to the President of the People's Republic of China. The entire interview focused on Georgia-EU relations and the relationship between Georgia and Russia. Consequently, the president's answer would pertain solely to the president of the country that has occupied the territories of Georgia," the statement reads.

EU and UN Showcase Success of EUR 5.1 Million Initiative for Private Sector Competitiveness in Georgia Partnership Sparks Entrepreneurship, Green Economy, and Economic Resilience

TBILISI. 14 November 2023 – The European Union and the United Nations presented the accomplishments of their EUR 5.1 million initiative, "EU Innovative Action for Private Sector Competitiveness in Georgia". Over five years, from 2019 to 2023, this programme had a profound impact on the business development landscape in Georgia. It supported significant strides in advancing the circular economy, fostering robust business clusters, enhancing legislative frameworks, and boosting Georgian producers' presence in European markets.

This landmark programme directly benefitted up to 100 small and medium-sized enterprises across the country and played a significant role in establishing and nurturing four business clusters, some of which have garnered international acclaim from the European Cluster Excellence Initiative. Furthermore, the programme created learning and development opportunities for over 1,500 entrepreneurs and farmers across Georgia, strengthening their business skills and increasing their prospects in the international marketplace.

With financial support from the European Union, the programme was implemented in close partnership with the Georgian Government and the private sector, with the ac-

tive involvement of four UN agencies: the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

The results of this collaborative effort were celebrated at the event on 14 November, where distinguished speakers from the Government and the private sector highlighted its impact.

"The EU's Innovative Action for Private Sector Competitiveness in Georgia has unveiled various opportunities for the private sector, laying the foundation for ongoing economic progress. The European Union remains unwavering in its support for Georgia's private sector, actively promoting green and sustainable practices and cultivating the prospective growth of Georgia's business and industrial landscape," said **Catalin Gherman**, Deputy Head of Cooperation at the Delegation of the European Union to Georgia.

Douglas Webb, UNDP Resident Representative a.i. in Georgia, noted that the private sector is the crucial player in safeguarding economic and social rights and achieving sustainable development for all.

"Together with the European Union and UN agencies, UNDP is working hand in hand with small and medium-sized entrepreneurs across the country to support Georgia's transformative journey toward a strong, inclusive, and sustainable economy, focused on the best interests of people and the planet. Our support benefitted one of Georgia's strongest clusters of packaging companies and produc-

ers, PMAG, which has increased its membership network to over 60 companies, excelled in digital transformation, introduced environment-friendly business practices, such as sustainable production and recycling, and gained international recognition from the European Cluster Excellence Initiative and the World Packaging Organization. From 2018 to 2022, these impressive transformations facilitated a more than two-fold increase in sales across the entire PMAG network," said Webb.

"Under this project, FAO has supported the local production of saplings through the development of a legislative framework together with the National Food Agency and the Scientific Research Centre of Agriculture. We also supported around 20 nurseries by increasing their technical capacities and providing equipment. Moreover, FAO has trained up to 1000 producers on modern sustainable practices for agricultural production and facilitated access to markets for local products. All in all, the achievements of this project will greatly contribute to achieving a more sustainable agricultural production in terms of quantity, quality, and environmental impact, implementing good agricultural practices with EU standards, noted **Javier Sanz Alvarez**, the FAO Programme Coordinator.

"UNIDO directly supported 36 SMEs and trained/coached up to 300 beneficiaries across different business sectors in Georgia. UNIDO helped producers overcome constraints related to production and quality management, allowing them to sustainably resume their business operations. Notably, one company obtained Good Distribution Practice (GDP) certification

and gained access to the market. With UNIDO's assistance, Georgian Marine Fishing and Biopharmaceutical Clusters managed to bring together different producers and through joint activities achieved the objectives, which would've been left unresolved without the assistance of the EU-funded project," said **Giorgi Andguladze**, UNIDO National Project Coordinator.

"Cultivating a dynamic synergy between the diaspora and local businesses, the International Organization for Migration has mapped the high-profile Georgian diaspora in the EU and globally. Through our extensive database, comprising approximately 4000 diaspora profiles, we have actively engaged with hundreds of individuals, exploring their skills, experience, and interests. Our overarching goal has been to establish robust connections between local businesses and the diaspora, facilitating the effective use of diaspora resources, knowledge, and ideas. This initiative has not only strengthened trade but also facilitated capacity building and driven collaborative initiatives. The diaspora's role as agents for local development was successfully pilot tested," said **Sanja Celebic Lukovac**, IOM Chief of Mission.

One of the programme's most notable achievements is the substantial support provided to business clusters in Georgia, increasing the opportunities for participating companies and entire business sectors to excel both nationally and globally. The European and the United Nations assisted four business clusters, each contributing to specific areas of Georgia's economy:

1. Packaging Cluster –

PMAG, the ECEI Bronze Label holder, full member of the World Packaging Organization (WPO). Supported by: UNDP.

2. Seed and Seedlings Cluster, facilitating the National Seeding Certification System development, technical support for nurseries, farmers training and Farmers' Markets. Supported by: FAO.

3. Georgian Biopharmaceutical Cluster. Supported by: UNIDO.

4. Marine Fishing Cluster. Supported by: UNIDO.

Furthermore, the programme helped strengthen public-private partnerships across various areas of business development, including waste management. In 2023, regional and local authorities in both western and eastern Georgia reiterated their commitment to this cause by signing declarations of intent with packaging companies and international partners aimed at enhancing waste management practices and promoting separation and recycling at the municipal level.

The programme also played a pivotal role in creating strong connections between Georgia's small and medium-sized producers and the Georgian diaspora in EU Member States. This collaborative approach fostered cooperation and partnership across borders, strengthening Georgia's presence in the global marketplace.

The "EU Innovative Action for Private Sector Competitiveness in Georgia" opened new opportunities for the private sector and set the stage for continued advancement towards more up-to-date, sustainable, and greener business practices. The European Union and the United Nations remain committed to supporting Georgia on its journey toward a sustainable and prosperous future.

Weather

Wednesday, November 15

Day Mostly Cloudy

High: 19°C

Night Partly Cloudy

Low: 8°C

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