

EU Commissioner Várhelyi Advocates EU Candidacy Status for Georgia After Council Meeting

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

After the meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign and European Affairs of the EU member states, European Commissioner for Enlargement Olivér Várhelyi stated that both Georgia and the Georgian government have done their work, and therefore, Georgia should be granted the status of a candidate.

According to Várhelyi, his message to the Georgian people and the government is to keep working toward success.

"This is a strategic decision that the leaders must make themselves. Our proposals are very clear: we believe that Georgia has come a long way, and both Georgia and the Georgian government have done their work. Therefore, Georgia should be granted candidate status. We will see if the European Council will confirm this. My message to the people of Georgia and the government of Georgia is - keep working. This is the best recipe for success," said Várhelyi.

After the meeting, Várhelyi stated that this is a pivotal year for EU enlargement policy, expressing satisfaction that they



not only submitted a proposal to the Council but also witnessed decisions being made.

He stated that the Council's final decisions, made that day, are crucial not only for any progress in the enlargement policy but also for the advancement of enlargement itself.

"I think that the conclusion of the Council largely confirmed the comprehensive report that we presented to the Council regarding the 10 candidate countries. For the first time, we have 10 countries to report on. I believe that our reports and recommendations regarding the merits of the countries have been considered by the Council. I think it also shows that the work that has been done with the council is getting results. Of course, we now have to see how this will be reflected in the strategic decision of the leaders, which we all expect this week. We hope that they will also agree, which will be a strong message confirming the commitment of the Western Balkans, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia to the prospect of EU membership," stated Várhelyi.

Talakvadze Stresses Vital Importance of Peace Agreement Between Armenia and Azerbaijan for the Region

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Deputy Speaker of the Parliament Archil Talakvadze positively assessed the visit to Azerbaijan. According to Talakvadze, the Georgian delegation engaged in significant meetings with key figures, such as the president, the chairman of the parliament, and the prime minister, as well as their colleagues. Talakvadze also highlighted the active nature of the friendship group between the parliaments and mentioned plans for future collaboration.

Parliament Deputy Speaker believes that the future of the entire region, including economic and infrastructural projects, trade relations, and tourism connecting the two countries, significantly depends on the friendship and cooperation between Georgia and Azerbaijan. According to his assessment, the two governments are making every effort to strengthen and enhance rela-

tions with their strategic partner for the benefit of their people.

"Georgia supports long-term peace in the region and is prepared to contribute to future negotiations and agreements. Both the leader of this country and our Prime Minister are genuinely committed today, and the government is actively working to facilitate this agreement. Georgia has always been the space where Azerbaijan and Armenia could engage in dialogue.

Today, our mediation and participation are genuinely necessary, and we have once again heard from our partners in Baku that they appreciate and welcome Georgia's involvement in the process of reaching a peaceful agreement. The region, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia all need this agreement," said Talakvadze.

The Deputy Speaker also expressed gratitude to the government of Azerbaijan for support-



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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.6734; Euro - 2.8886; GBP - 3.3626; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.9673; Swiss Franc - 3.0511

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ing Georgia's European integration. According to him, the message and support President Ilham Aliyev announced in the international arena were once again acknowledged in Baku.

"At this point, of course, we really appreciate the support of our friends. The European integration of Georgia is in the interests of the region as a whole,

as well as in the interests of Azerbaijan, and of course it will further strengthen our positions in the international political arena.

There is very little time left before the final decision is made, but it is important that we are focused not only on the candidate status but also on the future when our country is already moving to the final accession stage.

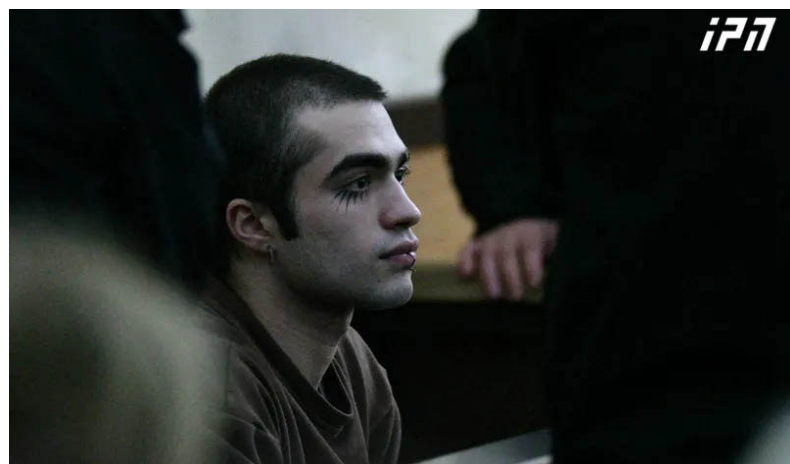
Georgia should be accepted; it deserves its rightful place in the European family, and it is in the interests of both Georgia and Europe.

I believe that a fair decision will be made, one determined by the vision of the European future, the security architecture in Europe, and, most importantly, the function and value of Georgia in the common European policy," Talakovadze said.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Lazare Grigoriadis' Family Set to Appeal to President Salome Zourabichvili for Pardon



Lazare Grigoriadis, who was arrested during the March protests, mentioned that following the verdict, his family plans to appeal to President Salome Zourabichvili for a pardon. In an interview with 'Interpressnews', Grigoriadis expressed no regrets and affirmed his unwavering

trust in the actions and aspirations of the President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili.

"My family members are planning to appeal to Mrs. Salome for my pardon. My request is no longer needed. I believe I have a fair understanding of what kind

of person our president is. So, I think there's no need to bother with reminders. If she pardons me, I'd be happy to talk to her face-to-face; we're driven by common goals, unlike the government.

I have no doubts about her actions and aspirations. I see,

and the public also sees, everything she does for our integration into the European Union. It is up to her whether she will pardon me or not; the pardon factor does not change my views in any way," said Grigoriadis.

Grigoriadis stated that he was advocating for the European course during the March protests

"During the protest against the Russian law, we not only protested against the law, but also followed the European course. Also, we had to protect the freedom of assembly and expression even after they started breaking up the rally without any reason. I will repeat myself here, I don't regret anything," Grigoriadis stated.

Georgia is Avoiding 'Sharp' Attacks on Russia, Says Tskhinvali So-Called President's Adviser

Konstantin Kochiev, the adviser to the so-called President of the Russian-occupied Tskhinvali region, stated that within the framework of the Geneva process, the Georgian side has consis-

tently used "aggressive" rhetoric in previous meetings. However, he noted a reduction in "aggression" during the meeting held in early December.

"In general, the current government of Georgia is trying to maintain a pragmatic line, avoid escalation and avoid sharp attacks against Russia," Kochiev said.

However, he stated that there are calls from other countries, including Ukraine and the West, for Georgia to open a second front against Russia.

"There are similar statements from the side of the Georgian opposition. Fortunately, the current government of Georgia behaves much more restrainedly. However, we face several challenges. We are aware that Georgia continues to strengthen its military, with an increasing NATO presence on its territory. We have heard reports about NATO exercises involving a large number of military personnel, causing understandable concern," Kochiev said.



Foreign Ministers of the European Union and their counterparts from five of the six Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) met in Brussels on 11 December. The meeting was chaired by EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell and attended by EU Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Olivér Várhelyi.

The meeting provided an opportunity to exchange views on the Eastern Partnership, take stock of its achievements, and identify concrete recommendations for the future of the policy.

Eastern Partnership Foreign Ministerial meeting takes place in Brussels



At the meeting, ministers addressed how the Eastern Part-

nership could continue to ensure that the needs of member states

and partner countries are met, what should be the key priorities of joint work in 2024, how to accelerate the delivery of the Economic and Investment Plan for the Eastern Partnership, and how to increase cooperation with regions such as Central Asia and the Western Balkans, and synergies with other regional policies such as the Black Sea Synergy.

Ministers discussed areas of cooperation, including connectivity, transport, energy, green and digital transition, and human

rights, civil society, rule of law, and security matters.

Ministers expressed support for concrete deliverables for 2024, notably in the area of regional roaming, road safety and transport.

"The EU, Member States and partners will step up their efforts to implement the Eastern Partnership's agenda for recovery, resilience and reform, as well as tackling challenges related to the ongoing consequences of the Russian war against Ukraine for the entire region," said a press release from the Council of the EU.

Ministers were also addressed by the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum.

(eunighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Wednesday, December 13

Day Light Rain
High: 6°C

Night Cloudy
Low: 3°C

Thursday, December 14

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 11°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 3°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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