

By Liza Mchedlidze

Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili Presents the 2023 Government Report

The Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Gharibashvili, presented the 2023 report on the government's work. In his speech, Gharibashvili highlighted the achievements of the Georgian Dream government since 2012. He mentioned that in that year, the foundation was laid for the real Europeanization and democratization of Georgia.

According to Gharibashvili, after Bidzina Ivanishvili and the Georgian Dream party assumed governance, the government aimed to strengthen the sovereignty of the country. He emphasized that their government has achieved significant results on the path of European integration.

"In 2012, the foundation was laid for the genuine Europeanization and democratization of our country. After Bidzina Ivanishvili and the Georgian Dream took over the reins of our country's governance, our government set out on the path of strengthening the sovereignty of our nation. I have stated many times before that if any government has achieved a very specific result on the path of our country's European integration, it is the 'Georgian Dream.' Starting with the signing of the Association Agreement, establishing free trade, and implementing the visa-free regime, the main priority of our declared foreign policy was reflected even in the constitution. This effort culminated with the recognition of the European perspective last year, and obtaining the candidate status this year was a kind of crowning achievement," Gharibashvili said.

In his discussion of the government's achievements, Prime Minister Gharibashvili addressed regional challenges, particularly the war in Ukraine. He expressed uncertainty about its outcome and potential impact on global security, comparing it to Georgia's experience in the 2008 war. Gharibashvili asserted that had the Georgian Dream been



in power in 2008, the war might have been prevented.

Highlighting war as the gravest danger, Gharibashvili credited the current government for successfully avoiding it and guiding the country to peace. He accused radical groups and hostile forces of attempting to involve Georgia in the conflict.

The PM also addressed the sanctions imposed against Russia, stating that the country has identified about 1,000 cases of sanctions evasion. As Gharibashvili explained, not a single instance of Georgia being used to evade sanctions was recorded.

"Regarding sanctions circumvention, no instances of evasion have been observed to date, and our country has not been

used to evade sanctions. We have worked and will continue to work as openly and transparently as possible. Every decision we make is based on the national interests of our country and its people, ensuring that the economy of our regions is not compromised. Simultaneously, we have acted with the utmost care to avoid any questions arising from our partner countries. We have successfully identified and addressed all such threats in a timely manner. While up to 1000 cases of sanctions evasion were identified, they were related to products sent from Europe to Russia. We promptly informed our European colleagues about these attempts," he stated.

Gharibashvili underscored the notable

economic advancements achieved under the Georgian Dream government, drawing comparisons between key indicators from 2012 to the present. He emphasized a three-fold increase in GDP, soaring from GEL 27 billion to GEL 80 billion. Additionally, the state budget nearly tripled, reaching GEL 28.7 billion in 2024. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has shown consistent growth, averaging USD 1.5 billion annually, a significant uptick from the USD 950 million recorded during 2003-2012. Furthermore, exports surged by 135%, totaling around USD 5.6 billion in 2022.

Gharibashvili discussed various macroeconomic aspects, emphasizing successful growth across sectors, and claimed that Georgia holds a leading position in macroeconomic parameters among EU member states and candidate countries. He detailed improvements in agriculture, wine industry, subsidies, business, tourism, aviation, infrastructure, information technologies, start-ups, ports, transportation, railway system, roads, urban spaces, education, salaries, and healthcare, drawing comparisons between 2012 and the present.

Gharibashvili highlighted the substantial increase in the defense budget, rising from GEL 645 million in 2012 to GEL 1.38 billion for the upcoming year. Gharibashvili also addressed the significance of Youth Army Camps, emphasizing their role in fostering patriotism and providing an alternative to what he described as a "poisonous pseudo-liberal ideology" and unhealthy lifestyles. He reiterated Georgia's European aspirations, emphasizing the need for continuous reforms to solidify the country's status as a European state and expressed the ultimate goal of de-occupation and national unification.

Parliament Chairman Shalva Papuashvili Addresses President Zourabichvili's Exclusion from Delivering Speech at Celebratory Concert

By Liza Mchedlidze

In response to a journalist's inquiry about President Salome Zourabichvili's presence at the celebratory concert on December 15, marking Georgia's achievement of EU candidacy status, without an opportunity to address the audience, Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia, Shalva Papuashvili, remarked that Zourabichvili "was among the people, not with the people."

Papuashvili emphasized that the Georgian government stood with the people and delivered the status of EU membership candidate to its citizens.

According to Papuashvili, when a person deliberately violates the oath and the constitution, they distance themselves from the people. He accused Zourabichvili of creating divisions in society and portraying

the country in a negative light.

Parliament Chairman emphasized that the government, unlike some opposition figures, is consistent and not impulsive. He argued that President Zourabichvili's actions demonstrate a disregard for the constitution.

"She was truly among the people, but she is not with the people, especially after breaking the oath taken before God and the nation, confirmed by the decision of the Constitutional Court. When a person violates their oath, breaches the Constitution willfully and grossly, they put themselves beyond the reach of the people. Therefore, Mrs. Salome put herself in this situation by violating the constitution.

The constitutional verdict against her has already been pronounced by the Constitu-

tional Court and also by the parliamentary majority, on behalf of the majority of the population of Georgia. Among them, this behavior of hers once again confirms that she is completely directed to somehow create divisions in society and a bad image, to present her country in a bad light.

The government differs from some agitated oppositionists in that we are consistent and not impulsive. The sequence implies that Ms. Salome violated the President's oath, breached the Constitution of Georgia, as confirmed in the decision of the Constitutional Court. Most importantly, she declares that she will continue to violate the Constitution of Georgia. Therefore, a person who violates the Constitution of Georgia cannot be with the people whose constitution it is," Papuashvili stated.



The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Germany's Federal Minister of Interior and Community Visits Georgia with Delegation



Nancy Faeser, Federal Minister of the Interior and Community of Germany, along with her delegation, visited Georgia for the first time on an official working visit, according to the information provided by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia.

At Tbilisi International Airport, the Federal Minister was welcomed by Aleksandre Darakhvelidze, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of Georgia, and Levan Izoria, the Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Georgia to the Fed-

eral Republic of Germany. Within the framework of the visit, Nancy Faeser will hold meetings with the Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Gharibashvili, and the Minister of Internal Affairs, Vakhtang Gomelauri.

"It should be noted that on December 15 of this year, the German Parliament adopted a legislative act recognizing Georgia as a safe country of origin. This decision by the German government confirms that Georgia is a legal and democratic state, ensuring the proper protection of human rights.

As part of the visit, there are plans to sign an agreement on migration and mobility between the Government of Georgia and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany. The agreement aims to strengthen coop-

eration between Georgia and the Federal Republic of Germany in the fields of labor migration and education, with a focus on implementing educational and internship programs more intensively for Georgian students and researchers.

In addition to the above, the agreement envisages the strengthening of the fight against illegal migration, which implies enhanced cooperation in ensuring the readmission and reintegration of those Georgian citizens who violate the visa-free travel regime. It should be noted that the readmission program has been successfully implemented since March 1, 2011, following the agreement signed between Georgia and the European Union in 2010 on the readmission of persons living without permission," the statement reads.

Irakli Kobakhidze: Depolarization Essential with Forces Committed to Georgia's Progress and European Path

Irakli Kobakhidze, chairman of the Georgian Dream party, emphasized that depolarization efforts should involve forces committed to the country's progress, particularly in the direction of European integration. According



to Kobakhidze, this is the right approach.

"When it comes to depolarization, why don't they demand, for example, depolarization with specific political forces? I don't want to go into details and name them. Depolarization is of interest to us, and we need it only with those forces that are interested in Georgia's progress, including on the European path," Kobakhidze stated.

According to Kobakhidze, the action plan for implementing European recommendations envisions the involvement of opposition forces in the work process, although the management team does not expect this.

"The action plan envisages the participation of all parliamen-

tary parties, as well as non-governmental organizations, in the work process, as recommended by the European Union. When we look at the opposition, we do not believe that they can make a positive contribution to the development of the country and progress towards the European Union. This is our, so to speak, negative belief.

During the execution of the 12 points, several parliamentary political groups were constructively and productively involved in the work process. We expect constructive engagement from their side. As for the parties that have separated themselves from fulfilling the 12 priorities, the expectations for such parties are similar even now," he stated.

'We grow stronger together': EU4Youth launches its new project on coordination and policy support

In December, the EU4Youth programme launched a major new 'EU4Youth Coordination and Policy Support' project, aiming to support EU action on youth in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) region (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine).

The main goal of the two-and-a-half-year project is to enable young people from the EaP region to be proactive within their communities and to secure control over their futures. Areas of work will range from enhancing strategic partnerships and extending EU support on youth policy matters, to monitoring the



EU4Youth programme's overall progress, and communicating the success of EU-funded youth initiatives throughout the region.

The project is implemented by EY and GOPA, both seasoned in leading youth empowerment projects over the past five years. Behrooz Motamed-Afshari, team leader of the new project, shares his enthusiasm to continue enriching the lives of young people in the region: "Facing tough times and big changes in the region makes our work challenging, yet even more important. Through these challenges, we grow stronger together, bolstered by enhanced outreach, solid partnerships, and tangible results."

Past projects implemented by EY and GOPA have already facilitated improved opportunities in education, entrepreneurship and civic engagement for young people across the EaP region.

With the advent of this new project, there are high expectations for the generation of even more transformative ideas for youth empowerment and policy development. Beside the preparation of the EU4Youth Achievements Report 2023 and the planning of the EU4Youth Days 2024, one of the project's first activities will be the launch of the new cycle of the EU4Youth Alumni Network, which brings together beneficiaries of the EU4Youth, Erasmus+ Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps programmes, and the network of Young European Ambassadors from the Eastern partner countries. EU4Youth Alumni work to support a stronger engagement of disadvantaged young people from the partner countries, both in their community, and in EU mobility programmes.

(eunighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Tuesday, December 19

Day Partly Cloudy High: 6°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: -2°C

Wednesday, December 20

Day Clear High: 9°C

Night Clear Low: 0°C

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On December 15, “Hiroshima Nagasaki Atomic Bombing Exhibition” was held by The Nagasaki National Peace Memorial Hall for the Atomic Bomb Victims in Iliia State University for the first time in Georgia. The Exhibition, which has been opened since 2005 on occasion of 60-year anniversary of the Atomic Bombing in Nagasaki and Hiroshima, is a very important platform to deepen understanding of unforgettable humanitarian tragedy in the world.







