

President Salome Zourabichvili Meets with NATO Representative Javier Colomina

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili, met with Javier Colomina, NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia. The information has been released by the Administration of the President of Georgia.

The parties discussed Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration, the prospect of attaining candidate status for EU membership, NATO-Georgia relations, and the upcoming 2024 elections in Georgia.

Colomina personally extended his congratulations to the President of Georgia on the country being granted the status of a candidate for EU membership.

The NATO Secretary General's Special Representative underscored the significance of active participation by state institutions in the country's European integration process, emphasizing the importance of implementing institutional and democratic reforms.

During the meeting, it was noted that, in the context of the planned parliamentary elections, the coming year is even more crucial for the country to ensure that the elections are conducted in a democratic and fair environment.

Colomina reaffirmed his unwavering support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia.

President Zourabichvili informed the guest about the creeping occupation and the cur-



rent situation in the occupied territories, which is linked to the murders of Georgian citizens and violations of human rights.

According to the president, this situation demands a strict response from the international community.

The parties also discussed the strengthening and development of NATO-Georgia relations. It was noted that Georgia's repre-

sentation at the highest level is crucial for the NATO anniversary summit planned in Washington next year.

Health Ministry Reveals Skyrocketing Medicine Prices and Accuses Companies of Unjust Practices

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The Ministry of Health reported that certain medicines in the pharmaceutical sector are sold at prices 32 times higher, with markups reaching 1000%, 2000%, and even 3000% in some cases.

The Ministry alleges that there is a reasonable suspicion of an unjust agreement between pharmaceutical companies and the improper use of a dominant position due to excessive pricing and price collusion.

The Health Ministry attached a list of specific medicines and emphasized that the sector is prioritizing maximum profit, at the expense of exploiting citizens.

"Medicines to which the ref-



erence price does not yet apply are being sold in pharmacies at prices 32 times higher than the import price, with markups in some cases reaching 1000%, 2000%, and 3000%.

It should also be noted that medicines in large pharmaceutical chains have almost the same price. Excessive pricing and price collusion raise reasonable suspicions that there is an unfair agreement between pharmaceutical companies and improper use of a dominant position.

Artificial increase in the price of medicines is deemed unacceptable by the Ministry of Health. With existing unfair prices and unhealthy competition, the sector is harming citizens to ensure

maximum profit. It is evident that there is no free price formation for medicines among the large economic agents operating in the market, and healthy competition is limited based on agreements.

The pricing policies of large pharmaceutical companies bear the hallmarks of cartel deals. Consequently, to investigate this matter, the Ministry of Health will submit all the necessary documents to the National Competition Agency," the statement reads.

The Ministry stated that, in the near future, the state will set fair, reference prices (the upper limit of the price) for the mentioned medicines, above which their sale will be prohibited.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Tbilisi City Hall Announces Full Financing for all Beneficiaries of the 'Breast Cancer Medicines' Program



Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze has announced that as of January 2024, the Tbilisi City Hall will completely cover all costs for the Breast Cancer Medicine program, providing 100% funding for all beneficiaries.

Under the previously existing program, the mentioned medicines were

funded at 80%, and in some cases, at 50%, for individuals without the status of social vulnerability.

"Within the framework of the program, expensive medicinal drugs will be 100% financed for all beneficiaries, similar to citizens classified as socially vulnerable.

Before the mentioned change, the city's health care and social services provided only 80%, and in some cases, 50%, of the services offered by the program to individuals without socially vulnerable status. This decision will significantly ease the financial burden of patients and their families," Kaladze said.

Foreign Affairs Minister Iliia Darchiashvili Meets NATO Representative Javier Colomina

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Iliia Darchiashvili, held a meeting with Javier Colomina, NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia.

According to information from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the meeting covered priority issues related to NATO-Georgia political and practical cooperation.

"A positive assessment was provided for the dynamic and content-laden agenda of the current year. During the meeting, particular emphasis was placed on the

European Union's decision of historical importance for Georgia, which will also contribute to the country's NATO accession process.

The parties discussed the security environment in the region, and Javier Colomina once again confirmed the Alliance's unwavering support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia. The conversation also touched on the NATO Washington Summit planned for 2024.

Iliia Darchiashvili thanked Javier Colomina for his contribution to the progress in the Euro-Atlantic integration process," reads the statement.



EU4IndependentMedia brings Ukrainian, Georgian and Moldovan media to Brussels to cover historic European Council

The EU4IndependentMedia project last week brought several journalists to Brussels from Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine to cover the European Summit on 14-15 December, which decided to start EU accession negotiations with Moldova and Ukraine and grant candidate status to Georgia.

A group of nine Moldovan, ten Ukrainian and four Georgian journalists was assisted by the project's camera operators and TV producer and mentored by Alice Iacobescu from Romania and Ukrainian journalist from RFE RL Rostyslav Khotin. The support of the team was also extended to seven Moldovan journalists and camera operators selected by the EU Delegation in



ing these two days of the summit! Special thanks to mentors for the insights and tips on where to look for interesting details and proactively follow the news," said Artem Kulia from ICTV (Ukraine).

"Being able to cover the historic summit for Georgia from Brussels, the epicentre of events, is a huge opportunity for an independent media like TOK TV," said Nina Kheladze from Georgia. "Along with official commentaries, we were able to record interviews with independent experts who provided in-depth analyses of future integration processes so that we could inform our audience in detail."

The EU4IndependentMedia project is funded by the EU, and aims to foster resilience and financial sustainability of the independent media sector in Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine).

(eunighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Thursday, December 21

Day ☀️ Clear
High: 10°C

Night 🌥️ Partly Cloudy
Low: 2°C

Friday, December 22

Day 🌥️ Mostly Cloudy
High: 10°C

Night 🌥️ Partly Cloudy
Low: 4°C

Chisinau. In Brussels, the journalists attended briefings with European Commissioner Adina Valean, with Romanian President Klaus

Iohannis and Moldovan Foreign Minister Nicu Popescu, as well as with the Romanian MEP and vice-president of the European People's Party (EPP) Siegfried

Mureşan. They visited EU institutions and conducted numerous interviews and live broadcasts during the Summit.

"It was very easy to work dur-

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