

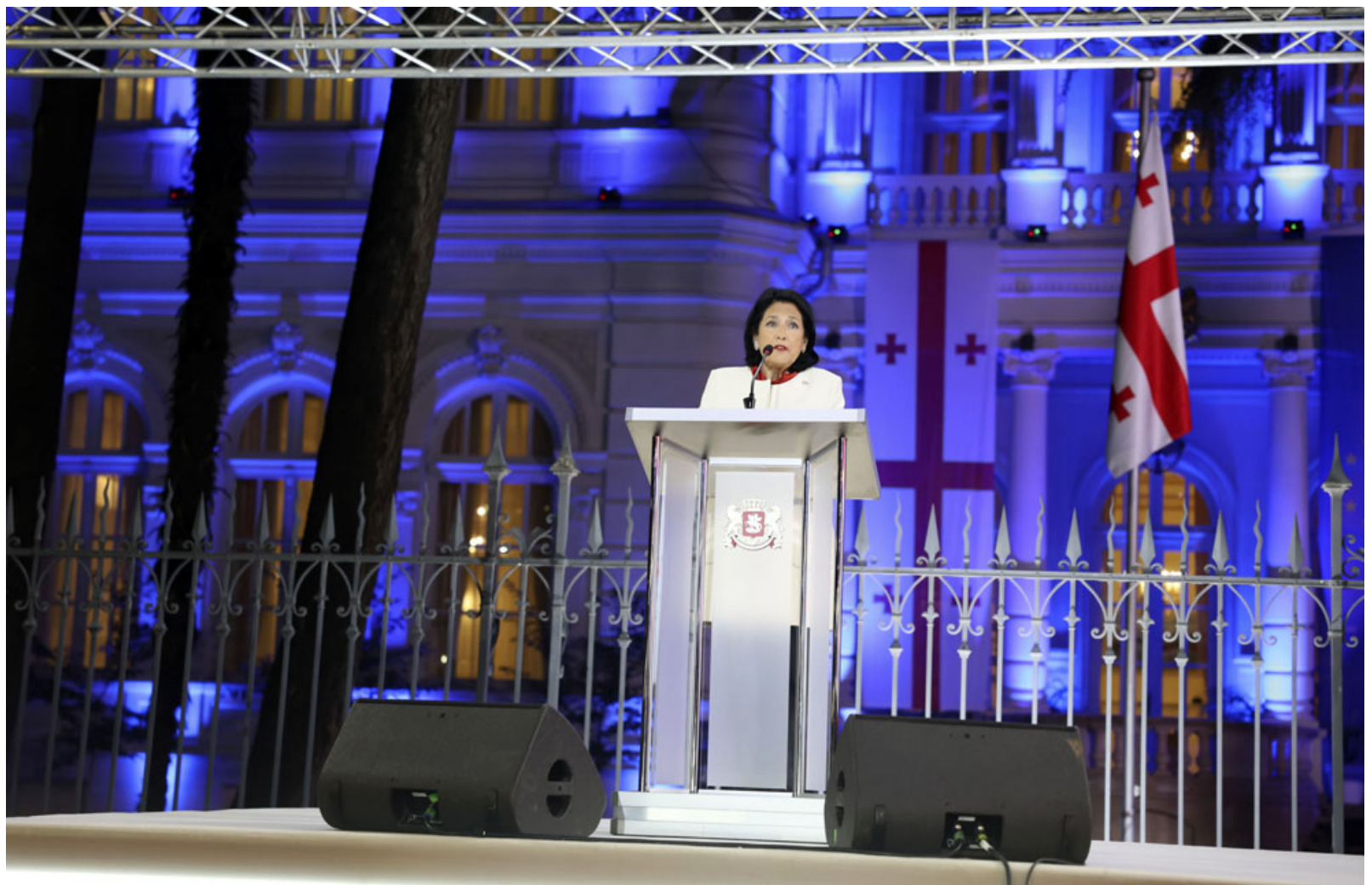
President Salome Zourabichvili Presents Georgian Charter, Urges Opposition to Sign

By Liza Mchedlidze

On May 26th, Georgian Independence Day, President Salome Zourabichvili presented the Georgian Charter, a comprehensive reform agenda aimed at aligning the country more closely with European democratic standards. In her address, President Zourabichvili emphasized the charter's significance, highlighting that it reflects the demands and requests of Georgian society. She called on opposition parties to sign the charter and unite around its goals, marking a collective effort to address crucial societal needs.

The Georgian Charter outlines several key reforms, including the abolition of laws seen as harmful to the country's European course, the liberation and restoration of trust in the judicial system, and the creation of a fair and transparent electoral process. These steps are designed to ensure a more democratic, just, and transparent governance structure.

President Zourabichvili underscored that the charter's essence and spirit are rooted in addressing the existential needs of Georgian society. She pointed out that the charter is not merely a political document but a reflection of the people's aspirations for a better, more equitable future. By inviting opposition parties to sign the charter, she aimed to foster national unity and collaboration, ensuring that these critical reforms are implemented effectively.



Abolition of Harmful Laws:
The charter promises the immediate repeal of laws that hinder Georgia's European integration. This includes:

- Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence: Often referred to as the "Russian law", which is seen as oppressive.
- Election Code Changes:

Repealing modifications that compromise fair electoral processes.

- Wiretapping and Off-shore Laws: Eliminating laws that violate privacy and promote corruption.
- Amnesty for 2024 Protesters: Releasing individuals detained for participating in politi-

cally motivated demonstrations.

Judicial Reforms
The charter proposes extensive reforms to restore trust in the judiciary:

- Integrity Verification for Judges: Inspecting judges' assets and past decisions to ensure transparency and accountability.

- Constitutional Court and Supreme Bodies: Inspecting all members to remove those with politically motivated decisions.
- New Judges: Appointing additional judges to prevent case delays.

CONTINUED ON Page 2

NATO Parliamentary Assembly Bureau Urges Georgia's Return to Democratic Reforms



Bureau statement on Georgia's law on the transparency of foreign influence

26 May 2024



By Liza Mchedlidze

The NATO Parliamentary Assembly recently released a statement marking the 25th anniversary of its important partnership with Georgia as an Associate Member.

The NATO PA reaffirmed its commitment to Georgia's sovereignty, territorial integrity, democratic development, and aspirations to join NATO.

However, the Assembly expressed serious concerns over Georgia's recent legislative developments, particularly the proposed "Transparency of Foreign Influence" law. This bill is seen as a step backward for Georgia's democracy, conflicting with NATO and EU values. If enacted, it could significantly harm freedom of speech, civil society,

and the media, undermining Georgia's democratic foundation and its NATO and EU aspirations.

"However, shared democratic values are the very foundation of the NATO Alliance and respect for these values is an essential condition for becoming a NATO member.

The law on the so-called "Transparency of Foreign Influence" is a step backwards for Georgia's democracy and runs counter to its NATO as well as EU aspirations and values. If this bill becomes law, it will severely damage freedom of speech and association and undermine Georgia's vibrant civil society and media landscape," the statement reads.

CONTINUED ON Page 2

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.7246; Euro - 2.9540; GBP - 3.4660; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.0347; Swiss Franc - 2.9787

President Salome Zourabichvili Presents Georgian Charter, Urges Opposition to Sign

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

- Electronic Case Distribution: Implementing a system to eliminate political influence in case assignments.
- Term Limits for Administrative Positions: Prohibiting judges from holding administrative roles for more than one term.
- Jury System Strengthening: Expanding the jury's role in high-profile cases.
- Reform of the High Council of Justice
- To ensure independence and reduce excessive power:
- Disciplinary Proceedings: Revoking the council's authority to initiate proceedings that could be used for persecution.
- Appointment of Admin-

- istrative Chairpersons: Removing the council's power in this area.
- School of Justice Independence: Ensuring the training institution for judges is free from council influence.
- Selection of Supreme Court Judges: Changing the procedure to make it more transparent and constitutionally compliant.
- Term and Role Restrictions for Council Members: Prohibiting them from holding other administrative positions or being re-elected.
- Prosecutorial and Security Reforms
- The charter aims to make prosecutorial and security bodies more accountable and inde-

- pendent:
- Prosecutor General: Electing this official with a high quorum for a single term to prevent political manipulation.
- Prosecutorial Council: Strengthening this body to ensure fair oversight.
- State Security Service (SSSG) and Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA): Fundamental reforms to deconcentrate power and enhance parliamentary control.
- Special Investigation Service: Empowering this institution to protect citizens from law enforcement abuses.
- Anti-Corruption Agency: Making it independent from the executive branch with investigative powers and ac-

- countability to Parliament.
- Economic and Regulatory Reforms
- These reforms focus on ensuring economic stability and regulatory fairness:
- National Bank: Restoring its independence by balancing executive and non-executive board members and preventing unilateral decisions.
- Regulatory Bodies: Ensuring these bodies operate free from political influence with democratically appointed heads.
- Electoral System Reforms
- To create a fair and transparent electoral process:
- CEC Chairperson Appointment: Improving the process to ensure impartiality.
- Lowering Electoral

- Thresholds: Making it easier for smaller parties to participate.
- Restoring Electoral Blocs: Allowing political parties to form coalitions.
- Diaspora Voting: Facilitating participation for Georgians living abroad.
- President Zourabichvili called on all political parties to sign the charter and work together to implement these reforms by the end of the first spring session following the October 26th, 2024 elections. This includes preparing for snap parliamentary elections to be held in a free and fair environment. The implementation of these steps will be overseen by a government nominated by the President of Georgia.

NATO Parliamentary Assembly Bureau Urges Georgia's Return to Democratic Reforms

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

The NATO PA criticized Georgian authorities for resubmitting and passing the law despite a presidential veto and public protests:

"By resubmitting and passing the law, Georgian authorities broke their promise to their own

people and to their international partners. They have responded to peaceful protests with unacceptable violence, and they have chosen to ignore the clear and consistent calls from their closest partners."

According to the statement, Georgia stands at a crossroads. To demonstrate readiness for

NATO membership, Georgia must recommit to democratic reforms and withdraw the "Foreign Agents" law.

NATO PA pledged continued support for the Georgian people and their aspirations, emphasizing ongoing dialogue with Georgian representatives to reinforce these messages and support

Georgia's European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

"If the government and parliament want to demonstrate Georgia's readiness to join NATO in the future, they must return onto the path of democratic reform and democratic consolidation. This law, which the Georgian president has ve-

toed, must now be withdrawn.

The Georgian people have demonstrated again and again that they want a democratic Georgia – in the EU and in NATO. They have protested with courage against this legislation. We will continue to support them and their aspirations," the statement reads.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Prime Minister Kobakhidze Accuses President Zourabichvili of 'Betraying' Country



front of the National army.

"Georgia and its independence are still facing the most difficult challenges. However, today, Georgian society is much more experienced than it was in the first years of independence restoration, and the country is governed by a government that stands on guard for the sovereignty and independence of Georgia, protecting its national interests.

It is the unity and reasoned steps of the people and their elected government that have given us the opportunity to maintain peace in the country for the past two years despite existential threats and multiple betrayals, including the betrayal of the President of Georgia," said the Prime Minister

tives have voiced their approval of President Salome Zourabichvili's Georgian Charter. The idea proposed by Zourabichvili has been accepted by Ahali, Lelo, European Georgia, United National Movement, Republican Party, Girchi - More Freedom, and Droa.

"It is a very important charter; it is necessary for the country, and it represents a significant commitment essential for the country's European future. Therefore, Lelo will certainly join this charter. We believe that its implementation will undoubtedly pave the way for the country to become a member of the European Union," Lelo's Badri Japaridze.

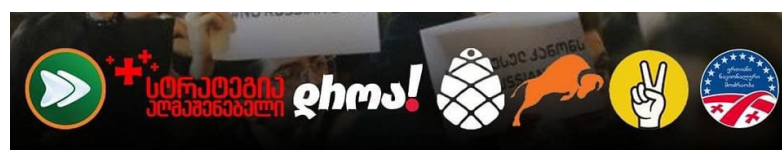
"I appreciate the President's speech, her spirit, and all the messages. This is the message

that, in my opinion, our society and political parties need: to demonstrate that different political forces can agree on the steps we need to take to move away from the edge of the abyss that the Ivanishvili regime has led the country to and get back on the right path. My position is that all political parties should join these messages," said the leader of European Georgia, Giga Bokeria.

"Parties Girchi-More Freedom and Droa welcome the initiative of the President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili, which calls for parties to agree on a unified vision of the reforms necessary for initiating negotiations with the European Union. We hereby sign the Georgian Charter," as stated by Girchi - More Freedom and Droa.

Several Opposition Parties Approve Georgian Charter Initiated by President

Opposition party representa-



Weather

Monday, May 27

Day Partly Cloudy High: 127°C

Night Showers Low: 16°C

Tuesday, May 28

Day Mostly Cloudy High: 24°C

Night Mostly Cloudy Low: 16°C

At the Independence Day commemoration event, Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze accused President Salome Zourabichvili of betraying the country and its interests during his speech in

published by The Messenger

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

The Messenger welcomes your contributions. If you are interested in submitting an article or news item please contact. All contributions should be submitted by e-mail. The Messenger Georgia's English language daily is an independent newspaper, and,

therefore, the opinions expressed in some articles do not necessarily coincide with those of the newspaper. We take no responsibility for any claims made in advertisements. The Messenger preserves the style of a source written in English where possible.