

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

UNM Chairman Tina Bokuchava Stresses Importance of Opposition Unity

The Chairman of the United National Movement, Tuna Bokuchava, responded to the statement by representatives of the For Georgia party, emphasizing that while everyone has their own preferences, it's crucial to respect the public's desire for opposition unity. She highlighted that their party supports greater unity because she sees internal conflict within the opposition as a betrayal of public trust.

Bokuchava noted that recent gatherings, whether they are protests or other interactions with the people of Georgia, clearly indicate their desire for unity among opposition parties.

The UNM Chairman argued that disagreements and conflicts within the opposition would betray public trust and potentially allow Ivanishvili's government to manipulate future elections.

Additionally, Bokuchava stated that preventing Ivanishvili from exploiting such divisions requires maximum unity among opposition forces.

"Everyone has their own choice, but the main thing is to respond to the will of society. Every meeting today, whether a protest rally or any other communication I have with the citizens of Georgia, clearly indicates their desire for opposition unity.

It is our duty to respond to this public demand; that is why



the United National Movement advocates for strong unity. Fragmentation, division, and con-

frontation within the opposition are betrayals of public trust and provide Ivanishvili's govern-

ment an opportunity to manipulate future elections.

Ivanishvili should not be given

this opportunity now; therefore, we should strive for maximum unity," said Bokuchava.

Prosecutor's Office Pursues Criminal Charges for Cyber Fraud and Money Laundering



BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The prosecutor's office investigated a transnational crime and started prosecuting two foreign nationals and two companies for cyber fraud and money laundering.

The agency reported that the defendants formed a criminal group to fraudulently embezzle a significant amount of money from individuals living abroad, totaling approximately 150,000 US dollars.

"According to the pre-developed criminal plan, the defendants and their associates contacted citizens of foreign countries under fictitious names, claiming to be representatives of a non-existent international investment company. They gained the trust of these individuals and convinced them to transfer funds, purportedly for purchasing shares of companies on a U.S. stock exchange, to the bank accounts of fictitious companies under their control in Georgia.

In this way, the defendants fraudulently took possession of a large amount of funds belonging to individuals, approximately 150,000 US dollars.

Subsequently, in order to give a legal facade to the unlawfully acquired funds, the defendants transferred the funds to bank accounts under their control abroad based on fake invoices, thereby legitimizing a particularly large amount of illegal income," the statement reads.

Criminal prosecution was initiated against the accused individuals for the offenses of fraud and money laundering, which carry a penalty of imprisonment from 9 to 12 years. Legal entities were also subject to criminal prosecution for money laundering, punishable by dissolution or confiscation of their operating rights, in addition to a fine.

According to information from the prosecutor's office, the accused individuals have already been subjected to imprisonment.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Georgia's Historic EURO 2024 Debut Ends in 1-3 Defeat to Turkey

participating in the European Championship. Open broadcasts of EURO 2024 matches are available on big screens in all cities of Georgia. Additionally, all games of the Georgian national team are



The first match of the Georgian football team against Turkey at the European Championship ended 1-3. The match took place at Signal Iduna Park in Dortmund. This is the first time the national football team of Georgia is

shown at the Mikheil Meskhi Stadium. On June 22, the Georgian team will face the Czech Republic in Hamburg, and on June 26, in Gelsenkirchen, they will play against the Portuguese national team.

Helsinki Commission to Hold Briefing on "Proliferation of Russian-style Foreign Agent Laws" on June 20

stated the Helsinki Commission. The speakers at the briefing will include Jasmine D., Senior Legal Counsel of the Human Rights Center of the Ameri-



On June 20, the Helsinki Commission will hold a briefing titled "Proliferation of Russian-style Foreign Agent Laws". The briefing will discuss how and why many countries adopt this authoritarian tool to repress civil society. A special emphasis will be placed on Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Slovakia, and Hungary,"

can Bar Association, Lincoln Mitchell, Associate Professor at the Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs, and Martina Hrvolova, Chairwoman of the "Friends of Slovakia" organisation. The briefing will begin at 14:00 local time.

Inspiring the Next Generation of Women Business Leaders

Women entrepreneurs from across Georgia gathered for an empowering forum supported by Sweden, UNDP, and the Bank of Georgia

TBILISI. 18 June 2023 – Economic disparities shadow Georgia's progress towards meaningful gender equality and are particularly evident in the underrepresentation of women in entrepreneurial and economic activities. Women own only one-third of economically active enterprises and hold just 16.5 percent of top management positions in private companies (UN Women/ILO, 2023). Women comprise less than 25 percent of new enterprise owners and account for only 33.9 percent of Georgia's formal economic participation (GEOSTAT, 2022).

In response to these challenges, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Bank of Georgia (BOG), with support from Sweden, are actively working to level the business playing field in Georgia, empowering women entrepreneurs and providing them with the tools and resources to thrive in the business landscape. On 18 June, more than 150 women entrepreneurs from twelve regions of Georgia gathered in Tbilisi for an inspiring forum. In a dynamic exchange of experiences and aspirations,

women from diverse backgrounds shared their journeys of empowerment and business success. The event spotlighted the resilience and determination of Georgian women to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams.

Participants, representing seven cohorts of the UNDP/BOG Women Entrepreneurs' Development Programme, highlighted the impact of comprehensive training and mentorship in fostering new ventures and advancing existing businesses. The showcased success stories spanned multiple sectors, including tourism and hospitality, agriculture, textile, food and beverage, education, technology, and e-commerce, inspiring the audience to strive for more against the odds.

Invited speakers and panellists Included:

- Nino Zambakhidze, Georgian Farmers' Association
- Ketevan Vachiberidze, 'Storera' (formerly B2C.GE)
- Natia Niniklashvili, soplidan.ge, Online Farmers' Marketplace
- Nana Dikhaminjia, Digital Transformation Center, Alte University
- Musya Qeburia, 'Musya's Work Shop' Art Shop
- Veriko Bazali, 'Hippo Velo', Bicycle Service Shop
- Natia Kakhidze, Woodhide Hotel
- Tatia Khaindrava, 'Wowchy' Gift Voucher Platform
- Ia Imerlishvili, 'Ia's Winery' Wine Production
- Tea Edisherashvili, 'Chocoholic' Artisan Sweets

In his welcome address, Erik Illes, Head of Development Cooperation at the Embassy of Sweden in Georgia, emphasized the role of economic empowerment in advancing gender equality.

"Women have the knowledge and the will to start and run business. Economic empowerment serves as the crucial catalyst for women to secure financial independence and carve out their rightful role in society," Illes stated.

Anna Chernyshova, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative in Georgia, noted that women's empowerment fosters a strong and sustainable economy.

"Empowering women economically is a strategic investment in a prosperous and equitable future. At UNDP, we are proud that our support encourages talented and motivated women entrepreneurs and inspires new business ventures, fostering gender-inclusive growth and sustainable development," she said.

Rusudan Baratashvili, Director of the SME Value-Added Services Development Department at the Bank of Georgia, highlighted the bank's commitment to supporting women entrepreneurs and fostering an economic environment that works for women.

"The Bank of Georgia considers women's empowerment among our key priorities. We aim to establish partnership networks that foster an equitable and inclusive economic environment. Networking and experience-sharing is a great motivation for new women entrepreneurs to enhance their business ventures. We wish every success to the forum participants and encourage them to implement new business projects, adding additional value to their enterprises," Baratashvili said.

About the Women Entrepreneurs' Development Programme: The Women Entrepreneurs' Development Programme empowers women business leaders and fosters opportunities for women-led business ventures across Georgia. Through tailored business development support, the programme equips women with the strategies and skills needed to achieve their entrepreneurial goals. The programme is supported by UNDP, the Bank of Georgia, and Sweden under the Sweden-funded UN Joint Programme for Gender Equality.

About the UN Joint Programme for Gender Equality: The Sweden-funded UN Joint Programme for Gender Equality is a flagship initiative advancing gender equality in Georgia across social, economic, and policy domains. Implemented by UNDP, UNFPA, and UN Women, the programme strives to assist Georgia in building an inclusive and equitable society. For more information, visit the UNDP website.

Weather

Wednesday, June 19

Day Partly Cloudy High: 30°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: 19°C

Thursday, June 20

Day Partly Cloudy High: 27°C

Night Mostly Cloudy Low: 17°C

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Obituary



The head of the Max Weber Foundation in Georgia, DR. ANDREAS HILGER, just passed away on Saturday, June 15.

The Messenger expresses its condolences to the family of the deceased.

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.

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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.

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