

By Liza Mchedlidze

## OSCE/ODIHR Criticizes Georgia's Abolition of Gender Quotas, Calls Move Incompatible with International Standards

The Office of the Public Defender has reported that the OSCE/ODIHR has prepared a legal report, at the request of the Public Defender, criticizing the recent abolition of gender quotas in Georgia. The report deems the legislative changes incompatible with international human rights standards aimed at eliminating discrimination against women in political and public life.

According to the OSCE/ODIHR report, the Georgian Parliament hastily discussed the draft laws over four days, culminating in their final passage on April 4, and subsequently overcoming a presidential veto on May 15.

"The quota system aims to achieve de facto equality and contributes to the gradual increase of women's representation in the country," the report states. It argues that there was no constitutional, international, or efficiency-based necessity for abolishing the gender quotas. Despite gradual improvements in gender balance within the Georgian Parliament due to mandatory quotas and financial incentives, the report notes that representation remains low compared to other OSCE countries and fails to meet international standards.

The OSCE/ODIHR report highlights the lack of specific evidence, data, or in-depth analysis in the explanatory notes accompanying the draft laws, failing to justify the need for abol-

ishing the electoral gender quotas and financial incentives for parties.

Additionally, the report criticizes procedural flaws, such as the hasty adoption process, in-

adequate participation, lack of consultations with stakeholders, and the negative implications of altering essential electoral elements close to elections. It emphasizes the importance of sta-

bility in electoral legislation.

The OSCE/ODIHR report reviews international obligations to promote gender equality in political and public life and provides specific recommendations

for Georgia moving forward. The Public Defender's Office underscores the importance of these findings in guiding future legislative actions to uphold gender equality standards.



## CEC Successfully Passes International Quality Audit

By Liz Mchedlidze



The Central Election Commission (CEC) of Georgia has successfully passed another international control audit in the field of election management, according to a statement released by the CEC.

The audit, conducted within the framework of the international quality management standard ISO 9001:2015, was carried out in two stages. In May 2024, an internal audit was performed by "Management Systems" LLC, followed by a remote control audit by international auditors in June. Both audits confirmed that the CEC's operations are in full compliance with the ISO standards, allowing the CEC to retain its international certification.

The audit report praised the CEC's adherence to quality management standards, stating, "News are constantly introduced in the election process and quality-oriented, transparency-oriented services are constantly provided to the interested parties. It is worth noting that the organization constantly takes care of improvement and implements a number of innovative projects."

The CEC first received its ISO 9001:2015 certification in 2019, which verified that its quality management system met the international standard's requirements. The successful completion of the recent audits reaffirms the CEC's commitment to maintaining high standards in election management, monitoring, and reporting.

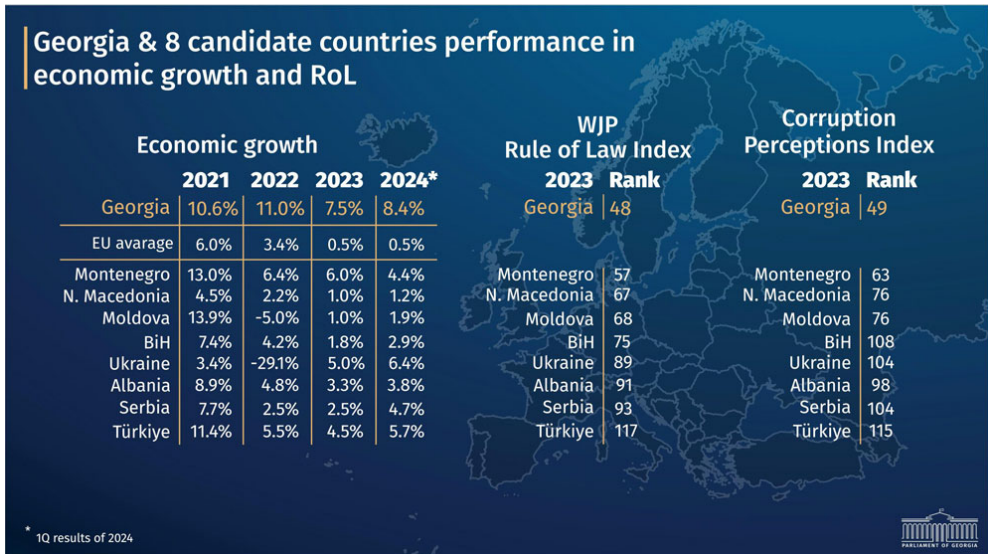
The statement from the CEC highlighted the organization's ongoing efforts to enhance the election process through continuous improvement and innovation, ensuring transparency and quality in its services.

## The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

### Georgia Leads EU Candidates in Economic Growth, Says Parliament Chairman

months of 2024, the economic growth of Georgia is 9.3%. Georgia is the first in terms of economic growth, compared to both EU membership candidates and the EU itself," wrote Papuashvili.



Georgia has achieved a 9.3% economic growth in the first five months of 2024, leading among EU membership candidates and surpassing the growth rates within the EU, announced Shalva Papuashvili, the Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia, on the X social network.

Papuashvili highlighted that Georgia also ranks first among candidate countries in international ratings of the rule of law and perception of corruption. "According to the indicator of five

He emphasized the government's focus on building democratic institutions and improving citizens' welfare. "Building democratic and effectively functioning institutions and increasing the welfare of citizens is the main concern of our government. The facts speak for themselves - Georgia is a leader among the candidates for EU membership, both in terms of economic growth and institutional development," Papuashvili added.

### Tina Bokuchava Highlights Human Rights Concerns at OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

drew attention to the deteriorating human rights situation in the regions of Georgia occupied by Russia. "Bokuchava also noted that together with Ukraine and Moldova, Georgia was



Tina Bokuchava, Chairwoman of the United National Movement, participated in the 31st annual session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Bucharest, delivering a speech that addressed the pressing issues of human rights in Georgia's occupied regions.

During the plenary session, which included a debate on the influence of Russia in Moldova and Ukraine, Bokuchava

once an advanced country on the path to European integration in the so-called Associated Trio," stated the press service of the National Movement. "However, the Georgian government has endangered the aspiration of the Georgian people towards the European Union, although the Georgian people loudly and clearly declare that they belong to Europe."

The EU and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) joint project EU4Dialogue has announced that over the past four years, it has catalysed more than 40 civil society initiatives aimed at improving the living conditions of local people and stimulating community engagement.

On 27 June, UNDP representatives visited Georgia's Samegrelo region to review the progress of several civil society initiatives promoting local growth and community engagement as part of EU4Dialogue.

In Zugdidi, they attended the official opening of newly restored mosaic murals relocated from the village of Rukhi, adding a new tourist landmark to the region. The restored murals, 'Lady in Red,' 'Summer in Samegrelo,' and 'Musicians,' are exemplary pieces of 20th-century public art heritage shared by communities across the conflict divide. Their

restoration involved Georgian and French experts from the 'Mosaica Studio' Crafts Development Centre and the Ribirabo

Foundation, supported by the EU4Dialogue project. Local youth from the conflict-affected regions actively participated in

the restoration, assisting the experts and learning the craft.

The visit continued at the consultation centre established by

the Charity Humanitarian Centre 'Abkhazeti' (CHCA), offering psychological support and counselling on various social services to people living on both sides of the conflict divide. In its first six months of operation, from January to May 2024, the centre provided over 120 face-to-face consultations and received more than 360 calls on the hotline.

The 'EU4Dialogue: Support to Conflict Transformation in the South Caucasus and the Republic of Moldova' is a joint initiative of the EU and UNDP under the broader EU4Dialogue programme. The project partners with local civil society organisations and grassroots groups to improve socio-economic conditions for people, build livelihoods, drive progress toward gender equality, promote youth engagement and support the peaceful transformation of conflict.

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### Weather

Tuesday, July 2

Day Mostly Cloudy  
High: 26°C

Night Mostly Cloudy  
Low: 19°C

Wednesday, July 3

Day Mostly Cloudy  
High: 28°C

Night Mostly Cloudy  
Low: 19°C