

President of Georgia and US Deputy Secretary of State Discuss Bilateral Relations and Euro-Atlantic Integration

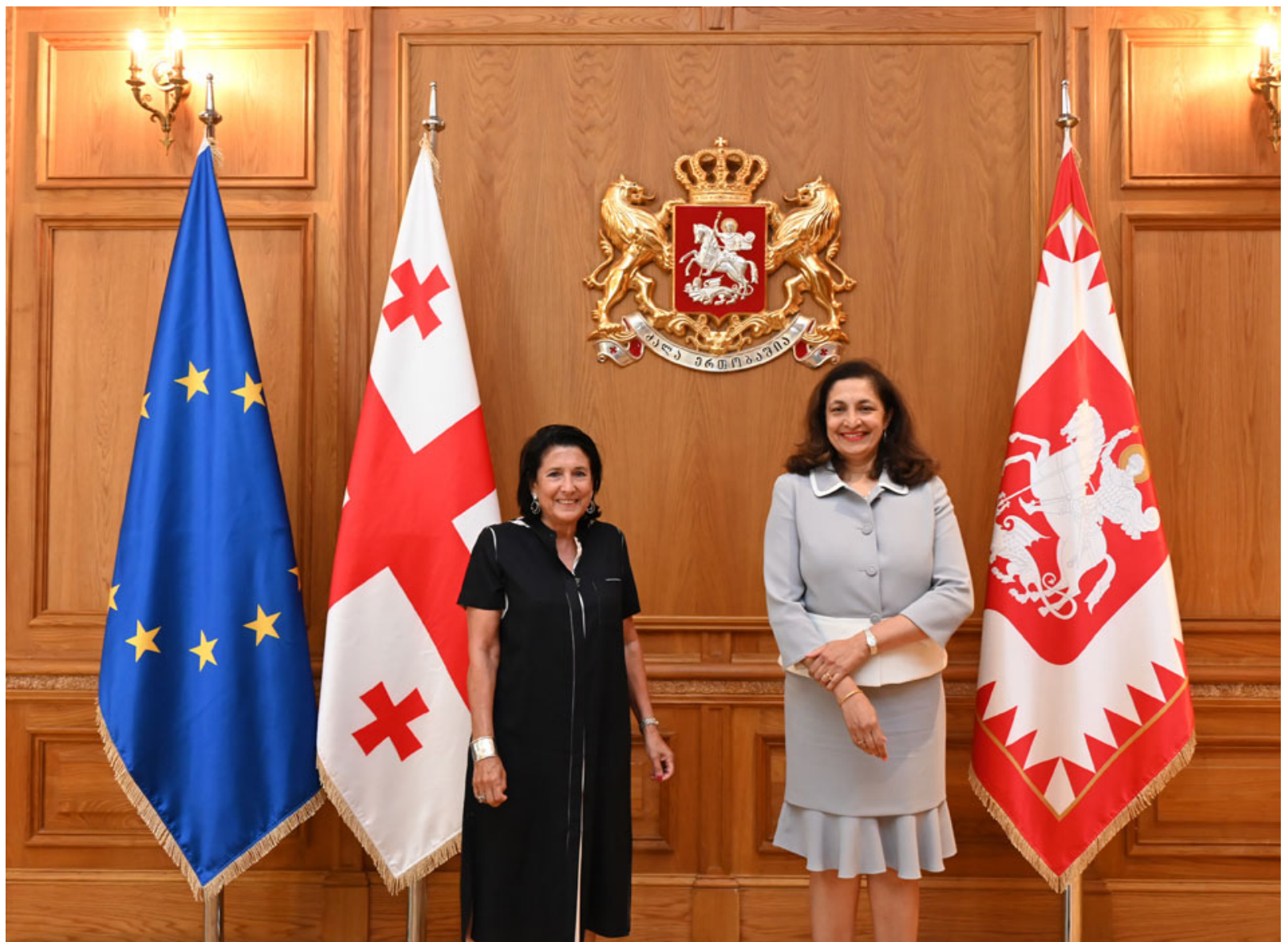
By Liza Mchedlidze

President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili, met with Uzra Zeya, the Deputy Secretary of State of the United States, to discuss Georgian-American relations and Georgia's path towards Euro-Atlantic integration. The administration of the President of Georgia disseminated this information.

The meeting took place at the Orbelian Palace, where President Zourabichvili emphasized Georgia's commitment to its European future, stating that the country has never been and will never be pro-Russian. She highlighted that the absolute majority of Georgians support the European path.

President Zourabichvili expressed gratitude to Deputy Secretary of State Zeya for the United States' strong support in various fields since Georgia's independence. The conversation also touched on the upcoming parliamentary elections, with the President noting that society, the non-governmental sector, and the youth would be fully mobilized to reaffirm Georgia's European choice.

Discussions included the postponement of military exercises and its potential consequences. The importance of the "Georgian Charter," an action plan created by the president to implement EU recommendations, was also



a key topic. Signatories of the charter committed to fulfilling their obligations and returning Georgia to the European path.

Deputy Secretary of State

Zeya thanked President Zourabichvili for leading Georgia's European path and reiterated the importance of the deep partnership between the US

and the Georgian people. She confirmed that the US would continue to support Georgia's sovereignty. However, she also expressed concerns about anti-

democratic changes by the Georgian Government, which pose challenges to the country's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, reflecting the will of the Georgian people.

US House Foreign Affairs Committee Passes MEGOBARI Act

By Liza Mchedlidze

The US House Foreign Affairs Committee has passed the Mobilization and Strengthening of Georgia's Capacity to Build Accountability, Resilience, and Independence Act, abbreviated as the MEGOBARI Act. The vote took place during a session of the House of Representatives' Foreign Affairs Committee, with 41 congressmen in favor and 6 against.

The bipartisan MEGOBARI Act was introduced by Chairman of the US House Helsinki Commission and Congressman Joe Wilson (South Carolina) along with Congressmen Steve Cohen (Tennessee), Richard Hudson (North Carolina), and Mark Weiss (Texas). The bill aims to strengthen democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in Georgia, reaffirming the US commitment to support Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration and counter the influence of authoritarian regimes, particularly Russia.

Key provisions of the MEGOBARI Act include:

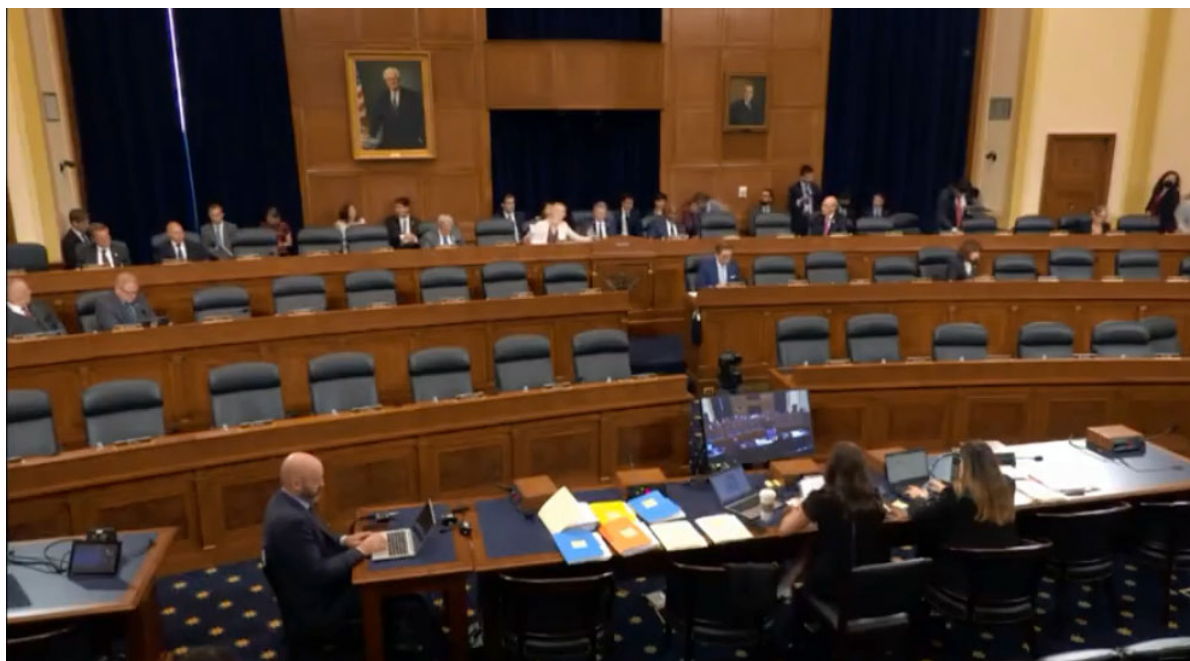
- **Supporting Democracy and the Rule of Law:** Emphasizing US policy to protect democratic values, human rights, and the rule of law in Georgia, recognizing the progress of Georgian civil society, and highlighting the importance of democracy for regional stability and US interests.

- **Addressing Democratic Backsliding:** Calling for increased oversight of the Georgian government and its connections to Russia and other authoritarian regimes.

- **Reporting and Sanctions:** Requiring reports to ensure accountability and address corrupt practices supporting Russian interests and sanctions avoidance.

- **Russian Intelligence Assets:** Assessing Russian intelligence penetration in Georgia and potential cooperation with China.

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.7233; Euro - 2.9540; GBP - 3.5065; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.1123; Swiss Franc - 3.0316

US House Foreign Affairs Committee Passes MEGOBARI Act

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Sanctions on Georgian Individuals: Identifying individuals undermining democ-

racy in Georgia and imposing sanctions and travel bans on them.

Creation of a Democracy Monitoring Working Group: Establishing a group to

monitor and promote a democratic environment in Georgia, especially during elections, to ensure fair and free electoral processes.

Strengthening Bilat-

eral Relations and Support: Providing for further US assistance, including negotiating a more favorable trade agreement with Georgia, expanding people-to-people exchanges, simplifying

the visa regime, developing an economic and modernization package, and providing security and defense support to counter Russian aggression.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

France Suspends Direct Aid to Georgia's Budget, Shifts Focus to Civil Society and Media

France has announced it will temporarily suspend direct aid to Georgia's budget, shifting its support towards civil society and the media. The decision was announced by France's ambassador to

Georgia, Sheraz Gasri. de facto stopped. This is the result of the decisions made by the Georgian government, which everyone knows."

Due to these developments, France has decided to pause its direct budget aid to Georgia. Instead, France will strengthen its support for civil society and media organizations within the country.

"It is up to the Georgian government to reverse course so we can get back to

operation.

Maka Bochorishvili Emphasizes Importance of Political Dialogue with Strategic Partners

Maka Bochorishvili, Chairman of the European Integration Committee of the Parliament, affirmed the necessity of maintaining positive dynamics in

ing, "There is no alternative to political dialogue with our partners. The state requires positive dynamics in our relations, and it is crucial to persevere in this direction."

She disclosed that a wide array of issues, including contentious topics, were addressed during the meeting. "Cooperation and dialogue with our strategic partners are of utmost importance," Bochorishvili emphasized. "It was a valuable opportunity to exchange perspectives



Georgia, Sheraz Gasri.

Ambassador Gasri stated, "On June 27, the European Council concluded that the path to joining the European Union was

what we want to do. That is, let's continue to support Georgia in all fields," said Ambassador Gasri, emphasizing the need for the Georgian government to change its current trajectory to resume full co-



Georgia's relations with its partners following a meeting with Uzra Zeya, Deputy Secretary of State of the United States of America.

Bochorishvili stressed the critical role of continued strategic partnership, stat-

and discuss various issues."

Bochorishvili reaffirmed the significance of ongoing political dialogue to strengthen relations with international partners.

EFSE boosts support for women entrepreneurs in Armenia with USD 10 million loan to AraratBank

The European Fund for South-east Europe (EFSE) has extended



a USD 10 million loan facility to AraratBank. This investment, complementing the support from early 2024, aims to empower women entrepreneurs by facilitating access to finance.

The new funding will enable AraratBank to issue over 300 sub-loans with longer maturities, targeting micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and especially those that are either majority owned or led by women.

This initiative is part of a

broader EFSE's effort to bolster business sustainability and job creation in Armenia, with the potential to support nearly 1,500 jobs and stimulate further investment in the MSME sector amidst ongoing geopolitical challenges.

An impact investment fund established in 2005, the European Fund for Southeast Europe (EFSE) aims to foster economic development and prosperity in Southeast Europe and the Eastern Neighbourhood Region.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Friday, July 12

Day ☀️ Clear
High: 34°C

Night 🌙 Clear
Low: 23°C

Saturday, July 13

Day ☁️ Partly Cloudy
High: 34°C

Night ☁️ Partly Cloudy
Low: 23°C

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