

Georgian Government Announces Grant Fund for Foreign Agents-Registered CSOs

By Liza Mchedlidze

On September 9, Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze unveiled a new government initiative to establish a grant fund for civil society organizations registered in the Foreign Agents Registry. The initiative aims to provide financial support to organizations that have complied with the registration process while promoting national interests.

During the announcement, the Prime Minister praised over 450 organizations that registered with the Ministry of Justice, viewing their registration as a sign of "civic responsibility." He stated, "Receiving foreign funding does not automatically mean harboring the negative interests of a foreign power." Kobakhidze also highlighted the registration process, which he said took place "against a backdrop of active pressure and blackmail" from both Georgian CSOs and donor organizations, some of which threatened to cut funding if they registered.

The new grant program, fully financed by the Georgian state budget, is set to launch in January 2025. "We have decided to establish a grant program for Georgian NGOs, which will be fully financed from the state budget of Georgia with the money of Georgian taxpayers," Kobakhidze announced. The institutional and financial foundations for the fund are expected to be completed within two months.

Kobakhidze emphasized that projects funded through this initiative will align with "Georgian people's interests," citing specific objectives such as "strengthening democratic institutions, fighting cor-



ruption, countering hybrid threats, caring for people with special needs, protecting the environment, and supporting ethnic and religious minorities."

He further promised that organizations participating in the grant program

would receive "twice as much" funding as they previously received from abroad. He also stressed the importance of transparency, assuring that all expenditures would be available for public scrutiny.

"We call on all non-governmental or-

ganizations that want to become an agent of influence of the Georgian people and promote the national interests of Georgia to actively participate in the competitions announced within the grant program," Kobakhidze urged.

When asked how government-funded CSOs could serve as watchdogs over the government, the Prime Minister responded, "It is in the government's interest to have CSOs that will help in the fight against corruption." He asserted that the government is open to funding organizations that will assist in identifying and eliminating corruption within government structures.

Kobakhidze also addressed concerns about whether government-funded CSOs could still be considered independent. He pointed to the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) in the US, which is funded by the US government but serves American interests, saying, "If an organization can be funded by a foreign government and still be considered an NGO, why can it not be funded by the Georgian government?"

The Prime Minister emphasized that transparency and freedom would be key elements of the program. "As for freedom of activities of the CSOs, freedom will certainly be the starting point and the defining point. Without it, we can't start fighting corruption or other tasks related to strengthening institutions," he said.

While the exact budget for the initiative is still under discussion, Kobakhidze assured that it would be in the millions, citing that the Georgian budget has grown by 10 billion GEL in the last four years.



Ivanishvili Addresses Rally in Akhaltsikhe, Calls for Ban on Opposition and Rejection of 'Pseudo-Liberal Values'

By Liza Mchedlidze

On September 8, Bidzina Ivanishvili, the Honorary Chairman of the ruling Georgian Dream party, addressed supporters in Akhaltsikhe behind a bulletproof glass booth. The speech echoed themes from previous rallies, with a focus on the "collective UNM" and rejecting "pseudo-liberal values" from abroad.

Ivanishvili praised Georgian Dream's 12 years of governance, highlighting the country's progress. "By standing together, we made it and built the country where all human rights, freedom of opinion, and speech are protected, the judiciary is healthier, the media is indepen-

dent, and business is inviolable," he said. He stressed that the GD would continue this work, adding, "We will do everything so that every citizen of Georgia experiences the development of the country and prosperity."

He emphasized that GD's greatest achievement was maintaining "continuous" peace, which he credited to the people's support. "This is the result of the years of declared support for the Georgian Dream," he told the crowd, receiving applause, reportedly pre-recorded, similar to previous rallies.

Ivanishvili warned against the "collective UNM," referring to the opposition. He claimed

CONTINUED ON Page 2

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.6949; Euro - 2.9752; GBP - 3.5247; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.9715; Swiss Franc - 3.1753

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CONTINUED FROM Page 1
that the opposition views war as

an opportunity to return to power. "The collective UNM sees war not as a disaster, but as an

opportunity... even at the cost of the blood of its own people," he stated. He also accused the UNM of "provoking" the 2008 Russo-Georgian War and attempting to involve Georgia in Russia's war against Ukraine by opening a "second front."

Ivanishvili portrayed the upcoming October 26 parliamentary elections as a fight for Georgia's future, framing it as a choice between peace and war, and between "pseudo-liberal values" and Georgian traditions. "We will decide between war and peace, pseudo-liberal values, and

nationality, family, faith, and values based on independence," he said, contrasting these with the opposition's alleged agenda of foreign influence.

He reiterated his commitment to outlaw the UNM, labeling it a threat to national security. He also promised that attempts to impose "pseudo-liberal values" from abroad would end under GD leadership.

Ivanishvili stressed the importance of winning the elections decisively, saying that a clear victory would prevent the opposition from contesting the re-

sults and would bring an end to political instability. "We need to win so convincingly that no one can question it," he said.

He also promised constitutional changes to support Georgia's territorial integrity and vowed that the Orthodox Church's role in the state would be strengthened in future elections. "Orthodox Christianity will be strengthened by the Constitution as a pillar of the Georgian state's identity," Ivanishvili declared, while also assuring that other religious rights would not be harmed.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Ukraine Recalls Diplomat from Georgia, Citing Inadequate Wartime Diplomacy



On September 8, Ukraine's newly appointed Foreign Minister, Andrii Sybiha, announced the recall of Ukraine's temporary Chargé d'Affaires in Georgia, Mykhailo Kharyshyn, citing "his complete lack of understanding of the realities of diplomacy in a wartime state." The decision reflects the Foreign Minister's call for more proactive and results-driven diplomacy from Ukrainian ambassadors during the ongoing war.

Sybiha outlined his expectations for Ukrainian diplomats, emphasizing the need for "concrete results, courage, and proactivity." He added that ambassadors in a wartime context must not be detached from the realities of war

but must take personal responsibility and demonstrate the strength of Ukrainian diplomacy through decisive action.

Responding to the decision, Georgia's Prime Minister, Irakli Kobakhidze, addressed the recall in a media briefing. Kobakhidze

distinguished this action from a similar decision in 2022, when Ukraine recalled its ambassador to Georgia in what he described as a "purely political decision."

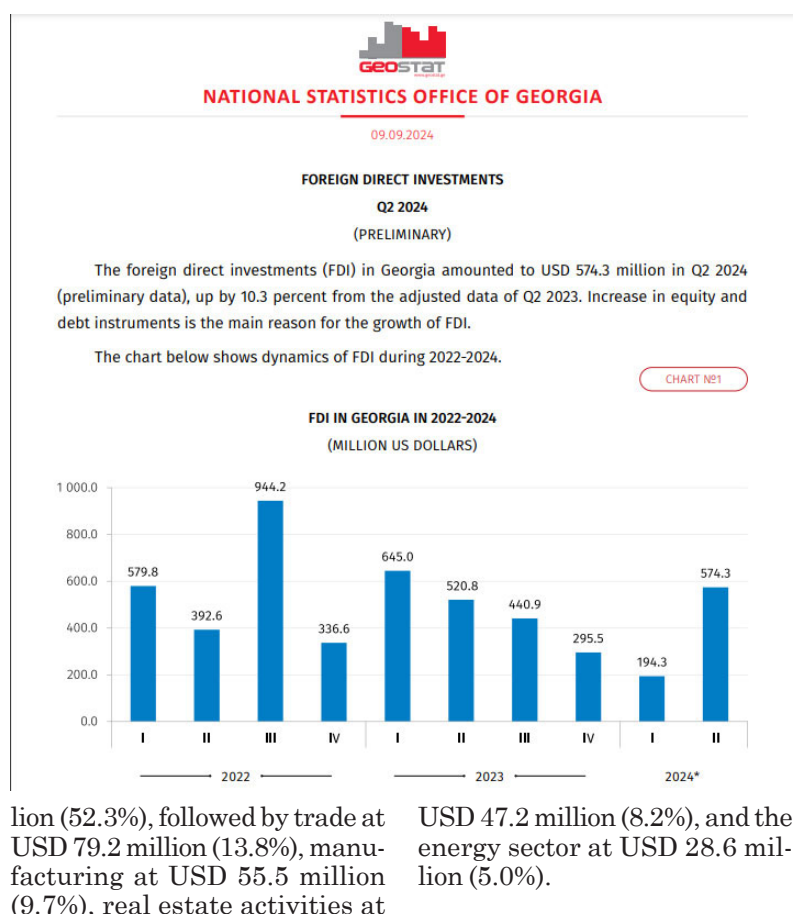
"In this case, according to our information, this is not a political act," Kobakhidze explained. He suggested that the recall was related to Kharyshyn's personal conduct rather than any broader political considerations. "A certain representative, who, if I am not mistaken, also has diplomatic status, bought household items, and this was considered inappropriate in light of the ongoing war, becoming the reason for his recall." Kobakhidze specified that the items in question were washing machines.

preliminary data published by the National Statistics Office (Geostat) on September 9. This represents a 10.3% rise compared to the adjusted figures for the second quarter of 2023. The growth in FDI is primarily attributed to an increase in equity and debt instruments, according to Geostat.

Of the total FDI, USD 451.3 million, or 78.6%, was in the form of reinvested earnings. Equity investments made up USD 101 million, accounting for 17.6% of the total.

The United Kingdom led foreign direct investments with USD 266.7 million (46.4% of the total), followed by Japan with USD 59.2 million (10.3%), Malta with USD 37.9 million (6.6%), Azerbaijan with USD 23.7 million (4.1%), and the Czech Republic with USD 20.9 million (3.6%). The top three investor countries represented 63.3% of the total investment.

The financial and insurance sectors attracted the largest share of FDI at USD 300.1 mil-



lion (52.3%), followed by trade at USD 79.2 million (13.8%), manufacturing at USD 55.5 million (9.7%), real estate activities at USD 47.2 million (8.2%), and the energy sector at USD 28.6 million (5.0%).

Weather

Tuesday, September 10

Day Mostly Cloudy
High: 29°C

Night Clear
Low: 19°C

Wednesday, September 11

Day Clear
High: 33°C

Night Clear
Low: 20°C

FDI in Georgia Reaches USD 574.3 Million in Q2 2024, Marking 10.3% Increase

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Georgia amounted to USD 574.3 million in the second quarter of 2024, according to

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