

Georgian President Zourabichvili Meets EU Leaders in Brussels to Discuss Georgia's European Path

By Liza Mchedlidze

Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili has visited Brussels as part of her European tour, holding key meetings with top EU leaders to discuss Georgia's progress toward EU integration. Zourabichvili met with European Council President Charles Michel and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to reaffirm Georgia's commitment to European democratic reforms.

In a post shared on X (formerly Twitter), Charles Michel described his meeting with Zourabichvili as taking place "at a crucial moment for Georgia." He emphasized that as a candidate country, Georgia must deepen reforms aligned with democratic values. "Reforms, the rule of law, and democratic principles are at the core of the EU path," Michel noted, stressing that decisions about Georgia's future rest with the Georgian people.

Zourabichvili thanked Michel for his steadfast support of Georgia's European ambitions. She expressed the importance of the EU's support in navigating this pivotal time, particularly ahead of Georgia's upcoming



elections.

The Georgian President also met with President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, who praised

Zourabichvili's commitment to advancing Georgia's European integration. Von der Leyen noted that the October elections would be a defining moment for

Georgia's democracy and its relations with the EU.

Zourabichvili reaffirmed Georgia's dedication to the European path, stating that Euro-

pean moral backing and election observers would be essential for ensuring the Georgian people's choice is recognized.

Anti-Corruption Bureau Revokes 'Political Actor' Status of TI Georgia After Prime Minister's Request

By Liza Mchedlidze

The Anti-Corruption Bureau of Georgia has removed the status of "political actor with declared electoral objectives" from Transparency International-Georgia (TI Georgia), one of the country's leading election watchdogs. The decision came just a day after Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze publicly called for the reversal during a special briefing on October 2.

Razhden Kuprashvili, head of the Anti-Corruption Bureau, announced the move, stating that it was in the "interest of the country" to revoke the designation. Kuprashvili explained that both TI-Georgia and its director, Eka Gigauri, were no longer required to disclose financial information related to political activities. "It is sad that the organization whose name is associated with transparency turned out to be the first to refuse transparency," Kuprashvili remarked during the briefing.

The initial classification of TI-Georgia as a political actor required the organization to reveal its funding sources and how the money was spent, particularly in the context of the upcoming elections. Kuprashvili suggested that financial transparency would have shown how public opinion was influenced by the organization and implied that TI-Georgia had a hidden agenda regarding international discussions on Georgia's visa liberalization.

Kuprashvili also took the opportunity to criticize civil society organizations more broadly, accusing them of operating without transparency and hiding their financial activities from the public. He argued that this lack of disclosure could undermine citizens' ability to make informed decisions.

The Bureau's decision follows widespread criticism of its perceived lack of independence from government influence. Kuprashvili defended the Bureau, asserting that its actions uphold "the highest standards" and are in line with European Court of Human Rights practices.



Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.7327; Euro - 3.0251; GBP - 3.6296; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.8927; Swiss Franc - 3.2229

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

Georgia's Government Risks Isolation from the West as U.S. Sanctions Escalate

Ahead of the parliamentary elections, the ruling Georgian Dream party threatens official Washington with a break in relations if more sanctions are imposed on Georgian officials. Experts believe this threat will not intimidate the U.S. and will harm Georgia by distancing it from the West, pushing the country toward Russia at an accelerated pace.

September 16 could be a pivotal moment in U.S.-Georgia relations. On this day, the U.S. State Department announced visa sanctions against 60 Georgian citizens—representatives of the government, business, and law enforcement agencies—for “undermining democracy in Georgia.” These visa sanctions extend to family members of these individuals. On the same day, the U.S. Treasury Department sanctioned four Georgian citizens for activities undermining fundamental human rights: Zviad Kharebava, head of the Special Tasks Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs; his deputy, Mileri Lagazauri; and pro-Russian Alt-Info founders Zurab Makharaidze and Konstantine Morgoshia.

This news seems to have deeply unsettled the leaders of Georgian Dream. The very next day, Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze called the new U.S. sanctions package unserious and unfortunate. Kobakhidze once again blamed the deterioration of U.S.-Geor-

gian relations on former U.S. Ambassador Kelly Degnan. Additionally, he framed the U.S. sanctions as an attempt to interfere in the parliamentary elections on October 26.

All of this fits into the ongoing anti-American rhetoric within the already sharply deteriorated relationship between Georgian Dream and the U.S. However, a new twist emerged—Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze summoned U.S. Ambassador Robin Dunnigan to the State Chancery and declared that by imposing sanctions, the American side had “approached a critical threshold,” and that if a similar decision were made again, Georgia might “qualitatively reconsider” its stance on U.S.-Georgian relations.

Clearly, the Prime Minister could not have made such a statement without consulting Bidzina Ivanishvili, so it must be assumed that he acted on Ivanishvili’s directive. Kobakhidze’s threat toward the U.S. signals two things:

First, it shows that the imposition of sanctions has caused panic within Georgian Dream. The news of the new sanctions was delivered to the parliamentary majority during a meeting. Many fear that the sanctions will continue and might target them

as well. Experts note that Georgian Dream did not expect to pay such a high political price. The West did not turn a blind eye to repression, persecution, and physical assaults. News of the sanctions was met with joy by the opposition. According to Tina Bokuchava, chair of the United National Movement, “violence against the Georgian people with European aspirations is being punished harshly by Georgia’s friends.” Bokuchava added that the sanctions serve as a “warning to Ivanishvili himself.” Likely, Ivanishvili also lost his composure; otherwise, Kobakhidze would not have made such a statement to the U.S. Ambassador.

Second, it has been made clear to everyone that under the rule of Georgian Dream, relations with the U.S. will not improve. Until now, Ivanishvili and the leaders of Georgian Dream had claimed that the situation would stabilize after a few months, when the war in Ukraine ended, and the West would no longer pressure the Georgian government to join the war, and “everything would fall into place.” For the past several months, Georgian Dream leaders had been talking about the need for a “reset” in relations with the U.S., implying an im-

provement. However, Kobakhidze’s threat-laden statement now virtually rules out the prospect of better relations.

Of course, Kobakhidze’s words did not scare the Americans. When U.S. State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller was asked about Kobakhidze’s statement that the U.S. had “approached a critical threshold” with its decision to impose sanctions, Miller responded with a question of his own: “A threshold for what?” and left it unanswered. U.S. Ambassador Robin Dunnigan noted that actions and statements that isolate Georgia further from the West, Europe, and the U.S. are not in the interest of the Georgian people.

The opposition points out that the Georgian people did not give the Georgian Dream government a mandate to distance the country from the West, and this will be evident in the October 26 elections. “How does Bidzina Ivanishvili plan to threaten the U.S. and the EU?” asks MP Roman Gotsiridze, answering his own question: “By taking Georgia, which he holds hostage, toward Russia and handing it over to Russia.” According to Gotsiridze, the Prime Minister’s statement is criminal and anti-state. He added that if Georgian Dream remains in power, Geor-

gia will face complete international isolation.

Georgian Dream continues to promote conspiracy theories about a global force in the West that influences political institutions in the U.S. and the EU. Reflecting this mindset, Kobakhidze claimed that the decision to impose sanctions was not made by official figures like President Biden but by “oligarchic forces,” and that the U.S. needs “de-oligarchization.”

In the deterioration of relations with the U.S., the ruling party leaders have alternately blamed former U.S. Ambassador Kelly Degnan, the so-called global war party, and the Georgian opposition. Simultaneously, Georgian Dream has repeatedly accused individual U.S. political leaders of attempting to interfere in the elections and incite unrest in the country. The party’s founder and honorary chairman, Bidzina Ivanishvili, refused to meet with U.S. Senators Jeanne Shaheen and Mike Turner, who were on an official visit to Georgia. Kobakhidze did meet with them, but the meeting sparked a scandal. Kobakhidze’s warning about approaching the “critical threshold” will likely only trigger a new wave of anti-Western statements.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Georgian Prime Minister Vows Diplomatic ‘Reset’ After U.S. and Georgian Elections

Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze has suggested that the country’s foreign relations may undergo a significant “reset” following the U.S. and Georgian elections, and the end of the war in Ukraine. Speaking on October 2, Kobakhidze emphasized that Georgia would need to “settle” with all international actors, including “Global War Party,” though he again did not clarify who he meant by this term.

Kobakhidze indicated that evolving geopolitical interests would shape Georgia’s future dip-

lomatic stance. “After the two elections are over, after the war in Ukraine is over, we are sure

exclusion from a U.S. dinner with President Joe Biden, but again offered no specifics.



that qualitatively, interests towards our country will change,” he stated. The Prime Minister expressed confidence that Georgia will be able to reset its relations with various international players starting early next year, based on shifting global dynamics.

The Prime Minister also hinted that the “Global War Party” may have played a role in his recent

TI Georgia to Continue Election Monitoring

Eka Gigauri, the executive director of Transparency International-Georgia (TI-Georgia), has confirmed that the organization will monitor the upcoming October 26 parliamentary elections, continuing its role as an election observer, which it has fulfilled for the past 24 years.



On October 2, the Anti-Corruption Bureau, following a recommendation by Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze, revoked TI Georgia’s status as a “subject with a declared electoral goal,” a designation that would have restricted the organization’s election monitoring. At a press conference, the head of the Bureau, Razhden Kuprashvili, justified the decision, which Gigauri has sharply criticized.

“Everything that was said in this press conference is a lie,” Gigauri remarked, calling the claims made by Kuprashvili baseless and legally unsupported. She emphasized that the government’s actions were an attempt to prevent TI-Georgia from monitoring the elections, but viewed the outcome as a “victory for the Georgian civil sector.”

Weather

Thursday, October 3

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 23°C

Night Clear

Low: 10°C

Friday, October 4

Day Clear

High: 24°C

Night Clear

Low: 13°C

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