

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

EU Ambassador Herczyński: Georgia Unlikely to Begin Accession Talks

Pawel Herczyński, the European Union's Ambassador to Georgia, announced that the EU's annual enlargement report on Georgia will be released in the second half of October. However, he could not confirm whether the report will be published before or after the Georgian parliamentary elections on October 26. Speaking to local media on October 7, Ambassador Herczyński expressed doubt that the European Commission would recommend opening accession talks with Georgia.

"We expect the enlargement report on Georgia to be issued in the second half of October, either a few days before or after the elections," said Herczyński. He added that it is "highly unlikely" the European Commission will issue a positive recommendation to open accession negotiations with Georgia, and an actual decision to start talks is "even less likely."

The Ambassador further noted that the EU's concern over Georgia will be discussed at several upcoming meetings. On October 8, a parliamentary debate will focus on Georgia, followed by formal discussions among EU foreign ministers on October 14. The European Council will also review the situation on October 17-18. Herczyński remarked that such discussions are "not a good sign," signaling growing concern within the EU over developments in Georgia.

Ambassador Herczyński also urged Georgian citizens to ac-



tively participate in the upcoming elections. He reiterated the EU's commitment to working with any democratically elected government but emphasized

that core principles—freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and minority rights—remain non-negotiable.

When asked about the Geor-

gian government's recent push to impeach President Salome Zourabichvili following her diplomatic visits to Europe, Herczyński said that the im-

peachment would not aid in depolarizing the country or fostering an environment conducive to free and fair elections.

ALDE Party Calls for Democratic Reforms and Sanctions in Georgia for EU Integration

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

At its Congress in Estoril, Portugal, from October 4-6, 2024, the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) adopted a resolution titled "Essential Fair Election Standards and Democratic Reforms in Georgia for EU Integration." The resolution emphasized the importance of free and fair elections in October 2024 as a prerequisite for Georgia's EU candidate status and highlighted the need for reforms aligned with the EU Commission's nine recommendations.

Key points of the resolution included the condemnation of Georgia's "foreign agents" law (referred to as the "Russian law"), which the ALDE Party views as obstructive to the country's EU integration efforts. The resolution also called for the repeal of this law and stressed the incompatibility of Georgia's

proposed anti-LGBT legislation with European values and human rights. Additionally, it expressed strong support for Georgian civil society and independent media, which have been the primary targets of the restrictive legislation.

ALDE voiced its backing of the Georgian people's aspirations to join the EU and supported increased financial assistance to aid Georgia's democratic and economic development. The resolution also aligned with the reforms outlined in President Salome Zourabichvili's Georgian Charter, which seeks to open EU membership negotiations.

The Party expressed regret over ongoing political persecution, including the prosecution of activists opposing the "Russian law," and the failure of the ruling Georgian Dream party to meet the EU's conditions for candidacy status. It condemned the widespread use of intimidation

tactics, such as threats and violence against opposition leaders and activists.

The resolution called on the EU Commission to firmly oppose election rigging and violence in Georgia, and urged the imposition of personal sanctions on Georgian Dream founder Bidzina Ivanishvili and his family for steering the country toward authoritarianism. It also demanded the cessation of political prosecutions, the release of political prisoners including ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili, and the annulment of penalties against activists.

The Party further requested the immediate start of EU accession negotiations following the elections if a new democratic government commits to the necessary reforms. ALDE also called for enhanced election monitoring and urged the EU to duplicate sanctions imposed by the US on those responsible for anti-democratic practices in Georgia. Lastly, it recommended that the EU refrain from high-level contacts with the current Georgian Dream government until significant reforms are made.



ALDE Party Congress 2024

Essential Fair Election Standards and Democratic Reforms in Georgia for EU Integration

The Congress of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) Party, convening in Estoril, Portugal on October 4-6, 2024:

Emphases:

- The necessity of free and fair elections in October 2024 as a crucial precondition identified by the EU Commission;
- The importance of Georgia's EU candidate status and addressing the EU Commission's nine recommendations;
- The obstruction of the European integration process by the adoption of the Kremlin style-"foreign agents" law ("Russian law") and the requirement for its repeal to initiate accession negotiations;
- The incompatibility of the planned anti-LGBT law with European values and human rights;
- Support for Georgian civil society and critical media, who are the main targets of the "Russian law." Protecting these pillars is crucial for democratic progression;
- Full adherence to the Copenhagen criteria, especially in building democratic institutions and aligning foreign and security policies with the EU.

Supports:

- The Georgian people's commitment to joining the EU; Georgia's rules-based full access to pre-accession financial assistance funds to help its economic and democratic development align with EU standards.
- Aligning with President Salome Zourabichvili's Georgian Charter and the essential reforms it outlines for opening EU membership negotiations;
- The formation of opposition coalitions to promote a pluralistic political environment and prevent loss of votes.

Regrets:

- The continued prosecution of activists who protested against the "Russian Law" in April and May 2024, and the enactment of this law;

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Georgian Dream to Initiate New Impeachment Proceedings Against President Zourabichvili



On October 7, Parliament Chairman Shalva Papuashvili announced that the ruling Georgian Dream party will initiate another round of impeachment proceedings against President Salome Zourabichvili. The deci-

sion comes after Zourabichvili's recent visits to European countries, which Papuashvili claims violated the Georgian Constitution.

Papuashvili explained that despite a prior Constitutional Court ruling that found Zourabichvili guilty of violating

the constitution, the "radical opposition" had shielded her from impeachment. He stated, "After she received this security, she continued to violate the Constitution at will," referring to Zourabichvili's foreign visits to

France, Germany, Poland, and Belgium without government approval.

The Chairman also criticized foreign governments for receiving Zourabichvili during these visits, calling it a violation of the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs. "The reception of Salome Zourabichvili without the mandatory consent of the Georgian government is a violation of the principle of non-interference and goes against our common European values," he remarked.

Papuashvili confirmed that Georgian Dream will submit a new impeachment request to the Constitutional Court before the parliamentary elections. He noted that if the ruling party gains a constitutional majority in the elections, they will impeach Zourabichvili during the first session of parliament.

President Zourabichvili Seeks to Repair Relations with Europe

On October 5, President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili spoke about her recent visits to European countries, addressing

the need to mend ties with the West amid the government's current isolation. In an interview with TV Pirveli she remarked, "The reason for my visits was precisely that our relations with everyone are ruined." She stressed the importance of demonstrating a commitment to EU integration in the upcoming elections to restore Georgia's position within the European framework.

Zourabichvili indicated that during her trips, she received assurances from European leaders about the EU's willingness to engage with Georgia. "If Georgians decide that the EU is the

ultimate goal, the open window opportunity granted to Georgia because of Ukraine is still open and waiting," she stated, underscoring that a favorable decision from the EU Council in June 2025 could lead to the initiation of accession negotiations.

The President emphasized the critical role of public servants in shaping Georgia's future and ensuring democratic development after the elections. She highlighted her discussions with the Polish President, who will chair the EU Council next year, noting that their cooperation could be pivotal in advancing Georgia's EU aspirations.



"Changes Require the Voices of Women" - UN Women Launches new Awareness Raising Campaign on women's political participation

26 September 2024

The meaningful participation of women in politics and in decision-making processes is a significant issue in Georgia, like anywhere else in the world. Although women represent more than half of Georgia's population - 52 per cent - and play a vital role in the country's political, economic, and social development, they rarely occupy decision-making positions. Their unique experiences, views and needs remain overlooked. Additionally, women who wish to engage or advance in politics often face barriers simply because they are women. Georgia significantly lags behind the average of Eastern European and Central Asian countries in this regard, and ranks among the lowest out



of the European states.

The campaign "Changes Require the Voices of Women," implemented by the UN Women Georgia Country Office, aims to raise public awareness and to mobilize public support for women's increased participation in decision-making. The content created for the campaign combines compelling facts and data with real-life stories - , sharing the experiences of women politicians and activists from different generations. The campaign

aims to showcase the contribution that women politicians and public figures made to Georgia's progress and development since the 19th century, highlighting that women's quest for equality and leadership in public life is embedded in Georgia's historic past and traditions.

Despite the population size, the turnout among women voters is lower than that among men. According to the 2020 parliamentary election data from the Central Election Commis-

sion, 1.9 million women are registered voters in Georgia. While the registered women voters outnumber the men by 7.2 per cent, men's turnout has been higher in every election in the past years. One of the key messages of the UN Women advocacy campaign is to make women voters more active, as the right to participate in political life begins with having an active electoral right.

In Georgia, there are only 27 women (19 per cent) among 129 Members of Parliament, and there are only two women (16%) among the Cabinet members; moreover, only 3 out of 64 municipalities have women mayors (4 per cent), and women occupy 9 per cent of heads of public entities. Along with structural and systemic barriers, yet another reason for women's low participation rate is gender stereotypes. A significant part of the Georgian society still believes that men are better suited at politics and that women are not suited for leaderships and decision mak-

ing. Women in politics often experience various forms of gender-based violence. According to the 2022 UN Women's Study on Violence Against Women in Politics in Georgia 54 per cent of women politicians have experienced various forms of violence during the election campaign period or throughout their political careers.

The advocacy campaign, which will run until mid-October, is being implemented by UN Women in collaboration with Leavinstone, one of Georgia's premier digital creative agencies. In addition to the content created for social media, the initiative includes four stand-up comedy shows to be held in Tbilisi, Telavi, Kutaisi, and Batumi. The campaign is implemented within the framework of the UN Women project "Women's Increased Leadership for Democracy in Georgia" (WILD) with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

Weather

Tuesday, October 8

Day Partly Cloudy High: 27°C

Night Mostly Cloudy Low: 13°C

Wednesday, October 9

Day Clear High: 26°C

Night Clear Low: 12°C

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