

Georgian President Zourabichvili Calls for Unity and New Elections Amid Political Crisis

By Liza Mchedlidze

On November 22, Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili gave an in-depth interview to Mtavari TV, addressing the country's ongoing political crisis following the disputed October 26 elections. She expressed hope for a resolution, emphasizing the importance of unity among Georgian citizens and strong international support.

President Zourabichvili described the recent elections as a "stolen" event and called on citizens to resist accepting the current state of affairs. Drawing parallels to Georgia's history of emigration and hope for independence, she said, "We shouldn't come to terms with the stolen elections... This is not the reality we should accept."

She criticized the ruling Georgian Dream (GD) party, describing its governance as authoritarian and likening the country's political structure to Russia's centralized control. She warned that GD's dominance has led to a one-party rule across government institutions, threatening Georgia's democratic and European aspirations.

President Zourabichvili highlighted the international community's non-recognition for GD's electoral victory, noting the absence of congratulatory messages from key Western allies. She cited this as a sign of global



disapproval, saying, "The whole democratic world does not recognize Georgian Dream's victory."

She further warned of an impending financial crisis, exacerbated by Georgia's lack of an IMF program and dwindling national reserves. She predicted growing isolation for the GD government, stating that international disinterest and reduced aid could lead to internal and external pres-

ures that destabilize the administration.

Zourabichvili addressed the opposition's strategies, predicting they would boycott Parliament and calling comparisons to the 2020 elections inappropriate. "Whoever enters Parliament today will enter Russia," she declared, underscoring the stakes for Georgia's European future.

She also criticized GD's plans

to ensure future presidential candidates align with party expectations, describing the move as further consolidating GD's power.

Despite the challenges, the President expressed optimism about Georgia's path, asserting, "There will undoubtedly be new elections, a technical government, and a coalition." She urged the Constitutional Court judges

to act courageously in preserving Georgia's democracy, hinting at the pivotal role they play in the nation's future.

Zourabichvili concluded by affirming her commitment to remaining active in Georgia's political landscape even after her presidential term ends. Her vision for the country remains rooted in its European integration and democratic progress.



EU Ambassador Pawel Herczynski Issues Statement on Violence Against Women in Georgia

By Liza Mchedlidze

EU Ambassador Issues Statement on Combating Gender-Based Violence in Georgia.

On the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, Pawel Herczynski, Ambassador of the European Union to Georgia, issued a statement addressing the widespread issue of gender-based violence.

Herczynski highlighted that such violence represents both a personal tragedy and a violation of basic human rights, impacting individuals, families, and entire communities. Globally, approximately one in three women have experienced physical or sexual violence. In Georgia, data indicates that half of women

aged 15-69 have faced violence at some point in their lives.

The ambassador emphasized the EU's commitment to addressing this challenge in Georgia by funding initiatives that strengthen institutional capacities, raise public awareness, and provide free legal, social, and psychological support to survivors. He also pointed to efforts to combat harmful stereotypes and promote tools like the SafeYou application, which aims to enhance women's safety.

Herczynski reiterated the importance of creating an environment where women can live free from fear and violence, aligning with the global theme for this year's 16 Days of Activism campaign: "Every 10 Minutes, a Woman is Killed. #NoExcuse."

The News in Brief

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President Zourabichvili Criticizes Interior Ministry's Protest Warning as 'Russian-Style Governance'

ing. It emphasized that blocking strategic or essential state facilities, including the Parliament, is a criminal offense under Article 222 of the Criminal Code, punishable by up to two years in prison for individuals and up to four years for group offenders. The Ministry cited a re-

warnings as indicative of "Russian-style governance" and accused the government of infringing on fundamental freedoms.

Gakharia Calls for Diplomatic Boycott of Parliament's Opening Session

EU ambassadors, asking them not to attend the session as a stand against what he described as fraudulent election results.

Gakharia argued that participation would legitimize an election he claims was marred by systematic violations, includ-



MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS

24-11-2024

STATEMENT OF THE MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS

As it is known to the public, before the convocation of the 11th Parliament of Georgia, a number of opposition parties are planning to assemble at Republic Square, starting on November 24 and march towards the Parliament afterwards.

Through the media and social networks, opposition party leaders are spreading information that the purpose of the mentioned gathering is to disrupt the first session of the 11th Parliament, which may be carried out by various methods.

The Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) issued a strong warning on November 22 ahead of protests planned in Tbilisi on November 24. The Ministry cautioned organizers and participants against actions that could disrupt the first session of the 11th parliamentary convocation, warning of severe legal consequences for violations.

The statement specifically addressed opposition parties' plans to march from Republic Square to the Parliament build-

cent government resolution identifying the Parliament and Government Administration buildings as sites of strategic importance.

"Otherwise, the police will take all appropriate legal measures to prevent illegal activity," the MIA stated.

President Salome Zourabichvili sharply criticized the Ministry's announcement, arguing that such measures undermine citizens' constitutional right to assembly and protest. She labeled the



Giorgi Gakharia, former Prime Minister and leader of the Gakharia-For Georgia party, urged the diplomatic corps in Georgia to boycott the first session of the 11th Parliament. At a press briefing, Gakharia specifically appealed to US and

ing breaches of voter privacy, manipulation of election commissions, and misuse of citizens' personal data. He stated that resolving the ongoing political crisis requires a full, independent investigation into these alleged irregularities.

ADB Program Helping Enhance Vocational Education and Training in Georgia

ADB ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

MANILA, PHILIPPINES (22 November 2024) — The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a 68,198,000 lari (\$25 million equivalent) policy-based loan to support ongoing efforts to improve the quality and access to vocational education and training (VET) in Georgia.

The financing is part of Subprogram 2 of ADB's Modern Skills for Better Jobs Sector Development Program. Under the first subprogram approved in 2020, access to VET education

was improved by streamlining VET admissions procedures, regulatory framework for adult education, and expanding government-funded vouchers program to private VET providers. VET teachers' remuneration increased, the "skills hubs" concept was developed, and public-private partnerships in VET were piloted.

"We see promising results of the government's policy actions in increased VET enrollment and historic low unemployment rate, and ADB is committed to continuing to support Georgia's education reforms," said ADB Director General for Central and West Asia Yevgeniy Zhukov. "By improving the quality and relevance of the VET programs, we aim to increase the employability of young people and adults while also fostering local economic development through bet-

ter skilled labor."

Subprogram 2 supports actions that help improve the quality and relevance of VET in priority economic sectors, increase access to the VET, and involve the private sector in improving the relevance of VET programs and curriculum. Among the government's actions were the approval of the VET Strategy of Georgia for 2024-2030, which incorporate gender and climate considerations and the approval of a new VET teachers qualifications framework that sets professional standards, development, and career progression to attract and retain qualified teachers. The program has institutionalized VET-industry partnerships administered by the newly established Skills Agency of Georgia governed by an independent supervisory board with equal public and pri-

ivate representation.

"This program is helping to reduce inequalities and foster economic growth by enhancing Georgians' access to quality VET in and outside regional centers and secondary cities," said ADB Social Sector Specialist Mamatkhalil Razaev. "The structured involvement of the private sector in the country's VET system governance and delivery leads to better employability of graduates, inclusive economic development, and quality jobs."

By promoting VET programs at general education schools in regions with no colleges, the program will help improve opportunities for young people in rural areas and those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. It will also empower women by improving their access to employment and education opportunities. The program will also equip students

from social and climate-vulnerable communities with the modern knowledge and solutions that are essential to respond to climate change.

The financing under Subprogram 2 is ADB's first local currency sovereign loan in Georgia. The program aligns well with Georgia's debt management strategy which seeks to increase local currency-denominated debt in public debt, improve the economy's resilience to external shocks, and drive sustainable growth.

ADB has supported Georgia since 2007 and is one of the country's largest multilateral development partners. To date, ADB's loans, grants, and technical assistance to Georgia total \$4 billion.

ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. Established in 1966, it is owned by 69 members—49 from the region.

Weather

Monday, November 25

Day Mostly Cloudy

High: 10°C

Night Rain

Low: 7°C

Tuesday, November 26

Day Rain

High: 10°C

Night Rain

Low: 5°C

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