

Foreign Minister Nominee Maka Botchorishvili Outlines Georgia's Foreign Policy

By Liza Mchedlidze

Maka Botchorishvili, nominee for Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, laid out her vision for the country's foreign policy during a joint hearing of parliamentary committees. With no opposition present, the hearing provided an unchallenged platform for the nominee, who emphasized Georgia's integration into the European Union, resetting relations with the United States, and addressing regional challenges.

Botchorishvili underscored Georgia's goal to achieve EU membership by 2030, framing it as the centerpiece of her vision. Citing Article 78 of the Georgian Constitution, which enshrines EU and NATO integration as national priorities, she described the candidacy status granted to Georgia as a "great achievement". She credited the progress to a decade of reforms, political efforts, and the will of the Georgian people.

"If the EU enlarges by 2030, Georgia will be the best prepared among the candidate countries," Botchorishvili said. She expressed hopes for intensified cooperation with the European Commission and emphasized the importance of leveraging Georgia's candidacy status to strengthen relations with EU member states and institutions.

The nominee called for a "reset" in Georgia's relationship with the United States, advocating for equal partnerships grounded in mutual interests. She highlighted the importance of revitalizing bilateral ties under the U.S.-Georgia Strategic Partnership Charter. According to Botchorishvili, this includes collaboration on security, trade, and political dialogue



to align with both nations' strategic goals.

Botchorishvili promised proactive neighborhood policies to promote peace and stability in the South Caucasus. She emphasized Georgia's trilateral cooperation with Turkey and Azerbaijan, as well as its ongoing partnerships with Arme-

nia and China, particularly in trade and economic development. The nominee also spotlighted Georgia's transit potential, vowing to strengthen the country's role in Europe-Asia connectivity strategies.

She reiterated Georgia's commitment to supporting Ukraine diplomatically and

humanitarianly while maintaining the international focus on resolving the Russia-Georgia conflict. She pledged to pursue diplomatic and legal avenues to ensure the de-occupation of Georgia's territories, prioritizing sovereignty and territorial integrity.



Public Defender's Legitimacy Claims for New Parliament Spark Backlash from Staff

By Liza Mchedlidze

Georgian Public Defender Levan Ioseliani has defended the legitimacy of the new Parliament's first session on November 25, but his stance has drawn criticism from a group of employees in his office. Ioseliani, speaking to the media, asserted that the session was fully in line with the Constitution, stating, "The only body we work for throughout the year is the Georgian Parliament, to which we submit a report." He emphasized that, according to Article 38 of the Constitution, the Parliament must be convened within ten days of the final results being announced by the Central Election Commission (CEC), which

he said was properly followed.

Ioseliani went on to argue that no other legal provisions or pending constitutional complaints could override this constitutional requirement. "The Parliament should be convened no later than ten days after the CEC announces the results. That's exactly what happened, and that's legitimate," he said.

However, his position has been met with strong opposition from 34 members of the Public Defender's Office, who issued a statement distancing themselves from Ioseliani's comments. In the statement, they expressed disappointment over the Public Defender's involvement in what they view as a process that undermines constitutional order and

harms the institution's independence. They particularly took issue with the fact that the Parliament recognized the credentials of MPs whose elections were still under review by the courts, which they argue violated both the Constitution and Parliament's own rules.

The staff members from the Public Defender's Office who disagreed with Ioseliani's stance underscored the damage this controversy could do to the institution's credibility. "We are aware that such negative events have an impact on the reputation of the institution, which has been built over the years by the staff, not by Public Defenders elected for specific terms," their statement said.

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.7421; Euro - 2.8841; GBP - 3.4515; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.6007; Swiss Franc - 3.0963

EU Challenges Legitimacy of October 26 Elections Under Georgian Dream

By MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

The European Union has emphasized the democratic conduct of the October 26 parliamentary elections as one of the key prerequisites for initiating membership negotiations with Georgia. While the Georgian Dream party asserts that the elections were held to the highest democratic standards and that it has secured a fourth term in power, skepticism abounds. Not only does the opposition claim widespread electoral fraud, but Western nations have also been reluctant to congratulate the ruling party on its victory. To date, no international partners have acknowledged the election results. Instead, they support the opposition's call for an international investigation.

Western partners face difficulties recognizing the elections as legitimate due to widespread reports of electoral fraud on election day. Until an international investigation is conducted and potential evidence of Russian interference is evaluated, the legitimacy of the Georgian Dream government will remain in question. The EU is awaiting the final assessment from the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institu-

tions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and is planning to send a special investigative mission.

At a press conference following the November 18 EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Josep Borrell, announced that a mission would be sent to Georgia to assess allegations of election fraud. Borrell emphasized the need for transparency and reiterated the EU's commitment to investigating violations thoroughly. On October 29, Borrell had already called for a "transparent investigation" into the elections, and on November 18, it was confirmed that a technical mission would be dispatched to examine the irregularities. Borrell further noted that the elections signaled Georgia's democratic regression and accused Georgian Dream leaders of steering the country away from EU integration, contrary to the aspirations of the Georgian people.

The Georgian Dream party's response has been inconsistent. General Secretary Kakha Kaladze expressed a willingness to cooperate with international partners, while Mamuka

Mdinardze called the demand for an international investigation a violation of Georgia's sovereignty. Mdinardze stated during a November 19 briefing that election irregularities should be investigated solely by Georgian authorities, such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Prosecutor's Office — institutions that lack credibility both domestically and internationally.

Should Georgian Dream reject an international investigation, the consequences could be severe. Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis warned that refusal to cooperate with the EU would indicate that Georgia is not committed to transparency and democratic principles. The EU has already taken several measures in response to the policies of the Georgian Dream government.

The European Union has already taken several steps in response to the policies pursued by the Georgian Dream government. In the European Commission's enlargement report, published on October 30, the Commission noted that Georgia's EU membership process has effectively stalled. The European Commission does not recommend opening accession

negotiations with Georgia. The EU has also ceased high-level meetings with representatives of the Georgian government.

Additionally, several steps have been taken towards imposing financial sanctions on Georgia:

- The EU has suspended Euro121 million in aid due to democratic backsliding. Specifically, annual allocations are not fully utilized within the same year, resulting in the loss of unspent funds from 2022 and 2023 that were directly intended for the government;

- The EU has frozen Euro30 million in aid intended for the Georgian Defense Forces from the European Peace Facility (EPF). The EPF was established in March 2021 to fund EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) actions in the military and defense sectors, aimed at preventing conflicts, maintaining peace, and strengthening international security and stability. For example, in 2021, Euro12,750,000 was allocated from this fund to support Georgia's Defense Forces, and Euro20 million in 2022;

- Among international organizations, the EU is Georgia's largest donor; how-

ever, grant aid is set to decrease by 93% under the 2025 project. The EU grant amount will drop to Euro7 million under the 2025 project, compared to the Euro105 million planned for 2024;

- Josep Borrell, the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, stated that he would propose reallocating Euro100 million in aid originally intended for the Georgian government to civil society. Borrell made this statement ahead of the EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting.

The European Union's stance was reiterated by the Dutch Ambassador to Georgia, Meline Arakelian, in an exclusive interview with "Interpressnews". She emphasized that if Georgia genuinely intends to return to the EU integration path, it must first repeal certain laws as urged by the EU. This includes the "foreign influence transparency" law and legislation related to family values, which contradict European human rights standards. Additionally, Georgia needs to fulfill the nine steps outlined as prerequisites for advancing in the EU accession process. However, it remains doubtful whether the Georgian Dream party will commit to this course.

The News in Brief

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Unity-National Movement Coalition Appeals to CEC to Revoke Party List After Election Disputes

On November 26, Sopo Japaridze, leader of the Tbilisi branch of the opposition Unity-National Movement coalition, announced that the coalition had submitted an official appeal to the Central Election Commission (CEC) to revoke its party list. The request, signed by coalition

the election results. If CEC head Giorgi Kalandarishvili, whom Japaridze referred to as a "participant in the Russian special operation," approves the appeal after the mandatory three-day review period, the coalition will take further steps to ensure the Parliament's legitimacy is never recognized.

Unity-UNM becomes the third opposition group to formally request the CEC to withdraw its lists, following similar actions by Strong Georgia and the Coalition for Change.

Defense Minister Candidate Irakli Chikovani Reacts to US Postponing Military Exercises with Georgia

Irakli Chikovani, candidate for Minister of Defense, has expressed disappointment and confusion regarding the United States' decision to indefinitely suspend the Noble Partner military training exercises with Georgia. The suspension was announced by the US Department of Defense on July 5.

Chikovani described the US decision as "regrettable and incomprehensible," and expressed hope that it would be reconsid-

ered. "The decision taken by the US regarding the postponement of the Noble Partner exercise was regrettable and incomprehensible. During this period, we continued to conduct various

with NATO and its Western allies. However, the US Department of Defense cited political tensions as the reason behind the postponement. Specifically, the Pentagon pointed to accusations



exercises with our international partners across different directions. We hope that such decisions will ultimately be revised in line with the reset policy," Chikovani stated.

The Noble Partner exercises have been an annual event since 2016, serving as a symbol of Georgia's military cooperation

made by the Georgian government against the US and other Western nations. Georgia had claimed that these countries were pressuring it to open a second front against Russia and that the US was involved in attempts to overthrow the Georgian government.

Weather

Wednesday, November 27

Day Rain
High: 7°C

Night Cloudy
Low: 4°C

Thursday, November 28

Day Cloudy
High: 8°C

Night Mostly Cloudy
Low: 4°C

leader Tina Bokuchava, follows the coalition's rejection of the results of the parliamentary elections.

Japaridze explained that the decision stemmed from the coalition's refusal to recognize

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