

President Zourabichvili Condemns Georgian Dream's EU Suspension, Calls for New Elections

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Following the Georgian Dream's announcement to suspend negotiations with the European Union, Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili met with ambassadors from EU member states and opposition party representatives. After the meeting, Zourabichvili held a briefing where she addressed the police, the army, and the diplomatic corps.

In her speech, the President strongly condemned the actions of the ruling party, claiming that they marked the end of Georgia's path towards European integration. "Today an end was put to the constitutional coup, which has been started for several weeks or months. Today marked the end of the departure from Europe to Russia that began several months, if not longer," she said.

Zourabichvili stressed that the ruling government's decision was not a step towards peace, but a declaration of war against the people and the future of Georgia. "Today, this non-existent, illegitimate government has declared not peace, but war on its own people, its own past and future, our future, the future of our society and country," the President stated. "Because on this path there is no statehood, no independence, no future, except Russia."



The President then expressed her disappointment in the delay of the international community's response to the situation. "I called the diplomatic corps today and told them that the evaluations were a little late. They expected that there might be something else to prove. There is nothing left to prove, I told them again. Everything is confirmed, everything is clear, and if one does not see that it is clear, it is still proof that Putin expressed his satisfaction with everything in a few minutes and

praised the authorities for his obedience."

Zourabichvili urged the diplomats to take decisive action and support Georgia's demand for new elections. "I appealed to them and asked them to make all the decisions that were acceptable for so long and to help us in the only demand, which is our demand and the demand of the people — to appoint and hold new elections. This is our solution and what we are fighting for," she said.

The President also addressed

the Georgian military. "I want to appeal to the Georgian army, the army which is hurting the most today," she said. "Who cannot do anything today and is not obligated to do anything, but they are the most loyal to this country, who is most heartbroken that this country is returning to that Russia, from which we have barely come out, we have proved our independence."

Zourabichvili honored Georgia's national heroes, stating, "The portraits of all our national heroes are displayed in

this building [Orbeliani Palace], and they will be here, no one can take it away, just as no one can take away our independence."

The President concluded her address by making a direct appeal to the police, urging them to serve the country, not Russian interests. "I want to address the police, the real police," she said. "The police that serve the state. You are nothing without the state, it is your duty to protect citizens, not slaves, Russians and traitors. You should take into your hands what is up to you."

Georgian Dream Suspends EU Membership Talks and Refuses EU Budget Grants Until 2028

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The ruling Georgian Dream party has decided to suspend efforts to open negotiations for Georgia's EU membership until the end of 2028. Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze made the announcement at a special briefing, stating that the issue of starting negotiations would not be put on the agenda until then. Kobakhidze also confirmed that Georgia would refuse any EU budget grants during this period.

"Today we decided not to put the issue of opening negotiations with the European Union on the agenda until the end of 2028," Kobakhidze said. "Also, until the end of 2028, we refuse any budget grant from the European Union."

According to Kobakhidze, the decision is based on the belief that Georgia will be fully prepared for EU membership by 2030, both economically and institutionally. "The end of 2028 is the time when Georgia will be properly prepared from an economic point of view to open negotiations to join the European

Union in 2030," he said.

Kobakhidze assured the public that Georgia would continue fulfilling its obligations under the EU's Association Agenda and the Free Trade Agreement. "We are not stopping and will continue to fulfill our obligations under the Association Agenda and the Free Trade Agreement," he stated. "As indicated in the government program approved today, by 2028 we will have fulfilled more than 90 percent of these obligations."

Kobakhidze emphasized that Georgia would fulfill these obligations without financial assistance from the EU. "We will fulfill all these obligations with our own financing, without any financial assistance from the European Union," he said. "We are not going to join the European Union by begging and standing on one leg, but to join the European Union with dignity, with a sound democratic system and a strong economy."

He further criticized the EU for what he described as manipulative tactics regarding the membership process. "We will



CONTINUED ON Page 2

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.7418; Euro - 2.8907; GBP - 3.4719; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.4986; Swiss Franc - 3.1005

Georgian Dream Suspends EU Membership Talks and Refuses EU Budget Grants Until 2028

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

continue to move towards the European Union, however, we will not allow anyone to leave us in a mode of constant blackmail and manipulation, which is com-

pletely insulting to our country and society," Kobakhidze said. "We believe that our today's decision will make a significant contribution to improving relations between Georgia and the European Union."

Kobakhidze warned that using the issue of opening negotiations as a tool to manipulate public opinion was damaging to the EU's reputation in Georgia. "Using the issue of opening negotiations as a tool to divide and

manipulate the society causes serious damage to the EU's reputation in Georgia," he said. "Our decision today will prevent this reputational damage to the EU in the future."

The Prime Minister also emphasized that Georgia's relationship with the EU should be based on mutual respect, not as a favor. "It should be emphasized that Georgia-EU relations, by their content, are bilateral and can only be bilateral," Kobakhidze stated. "We are a proud and self-respecting nation with a long history. Therefore, it is categorically unacceptable for us to consider integration into the European

Union as a mercy that the European Union should give us."

Kobakhidze concluded with a statement about Georgia's future in the EU. "We believe that Georgia, with its rich culture and potential, can enrich the European Union just as much as the European Union can enrich Georgia," he said. "By 2030, Georgia will be more ready to join the European Union than all the candidate countries. Georgia will become a member state of the European Union only with peace, dignity, and prosperity. This is our promise to the Georgian people, which we will definitely fulfill."

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Papuashvili: EU Membership Involves Compromises on Sovereignty and Trade



Shalva Papuashvili, Chairman of the Parliament from the ruling Georgian Dream party, speaking on *Rustavi 2*, Papuashvili claimed that EU membership would involve significant compromises.

"Membership of the Union means giving up part of sovereignty and economic freedom," he stated, adding that Georgia would have to terminate free trade agreements with countries like China and members of the CIS.

Papuashvili expressed optimism about Georgia's readiness for EU integration. "By 2030, Georgia will be the most prepared country for EU membership," he

claimed.

Chairman also claimed that if Georgia joins the European Union, it would become part of the Schengen area. He said this would mean that entering Georgia would grant access to the Schengen area, and as

a result, people from countries without visa-free travel agreements with the EU would not be able to enter Georgia.

"Do you know how many countries we will have to cancel visa-free traffic with?" Papuashvili asked. "On one side is integration with the European Union, on the other side is disintegration with many countries," he added.

Papuashvili criticized the Lithuanian Foreign Minister's involvement in local protests. "How can we hope for a positive decision from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania? He goes to rallies here. What can we do?"

Court Grants Extradition of Journalist Afghan Sadigov to Azerbaijan

The Tbilisi City Court, under Judge Arsen Kalatozishvili, has approved the extradition of Afghan Sadigov to Azerbaijan. Sadigov, the editor-in-chief of Azerbaijan's *azel.tv*, has been on hunger strike for several weeks, leading to serious health com-

which significantly affected his health. To seek medical treatment, Sadigov traveled to Georgia, where he was arrested on August 3, with the court granting extradition custody the following day.

The Azerbaijani government has charged Sadigov with threats and extortion, according to Georgia's Ministry of Internal Affairs, which led to his arrest for extradition. However, Sadigov's fam-



plications. His case has attracted attention from various international organizations, urging Georgia to release him due to his deteriorating condition.

Sadigov, known for his critical reporting on corruption and social issues in Azerbaijan, has faced political persecution, having been arrested twice in Azerbaijan. He went on hunger strike,

ily claims the accusations are fabricated, warning that extradition would expose him to brutal treatment under the regime of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev.

Prior to his arrest, Sadigov was blocked from leaving Georgia on July 18, when airport authorities informed him that he could only depart for Baku.

EU-Armenia Investment Coordination Platform discusses key infrastructure projects and investment cooperation

Weather

Friday, November 29

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 10°C

Night Partly Cloudy

Low: 1°C

Saturday, November 30

Day Mostly Cloudy

High: 9°C

Night Partly Cloudy

Low: 2°C

The third meeting of the EU-Armenia Investment Coordination Platform took place yesterday at the Government House in Yerevan, Armenia.

The platform brings together the Armenian government, the European Union, and international financial institutions (IFIs) to facilitate investments in Armenia, promoting sustainable development and economic growth in the context of the EU's Economic and Investment Plan

(EIP) and its flagships for Armenia. The meeting was co-chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan and Vassilis Maragos, EU Ambassador to Armenia.

During the meeting, essential infrastructure investments were discussed – the Caucasus Transmission Network project (connection of the high voltage transmission network of Armenia with the Georgian electricity grid), the Sisian Kajaran road (segment of the north-south

transport corridor that once completed will reduce the travel time), and the 'Resilient Syunik Framework Loan' project on municipal infrastructure.

Both sides committed to continue exploring new investment opportunities in Armenia under the new Resilience and Growth Plan. The Armenian authorities expressed the need to further promote the development of the country's quality infrastructure and capital market to further

strengthen trade and diversify the economy. The EU will provide •270 million in assistance for the period 2024-2027, •200 million in grant assistance and •70 million in grant funding to leverage investments in connectivity, resilience and business development, the EU Delegation to Armenia said in a press release.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

published by

The Messenger

43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi, 0108, Georgia

Founded by Prof.

Zaza Gachechiladze

Tamar Gachechiladze

Publisher

Mob.: +995 599 565621; +995 577 760000

E-mail: messenger@messenger.com.ge

http://www.messenger.com.ge/

Nino Metreveli

Commercial Director

Mariam Mchedlidze

Editor-in-Chief

Khatuna Gogichaishvili

Layout Designer, Photographer

The Messenger welcomes your contributions. If you are interested in submitting an article or news item please contact.

All contributions should be submitted by e-mail.

The Messenger Georgia's English language daily is an independent newspaper, and,

therefore, the opinions expressed in some articles do not necessarily coincide with those of the newspaper. We take no responsibility for any claims made in advertisements.

The Messenger preserves the style of a source written in English where possible.