

Kelly Degnan on 'rigorous election reforms'



US Ambassador to Georgia, H.E. Kelly C. Degnan.

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

The US Embassy in Georgia published ambassador Kelly Degnan's responses to the questions asked by the media representatives. Ambassador estimated political activities in the context of upcoming elections and gave out recommendations to the parties. She also talked about the involvement of OSCE/ODIHR and the US Embassy in the elections with the role of observers.

The ambassador believes the election campaign to have already started as a result of what "we are already beginning to see extreme and, I would say in some cases, irresponsible rhetoric." Even though she assumes to see more of that, the ambassador encourages political parties and leaders to help the Georgian community better understand what their platforms are regarding the issues such as education, healthcare, and the economic recovery after the COVID-19, so that the voters will be able to cast their ballot fully informed.

Degnan encourages vigorous enforcement of the recent electoral reforms, which are adopted based on the ODIHR recommendations.

"This is, again, the way the voters are going to be able to go the ballot and cast their ballots free of intimidation, free of vote-buying, and truly have free and fair elections here in Georgia in October," Degnan said.

As the ambassador noted, OSCE/ODIHR plans to send a robust monitoring mission, both long term observers and short term observers. There will also be embassies' teams of election observers on election day. She also noted to be certain that NDI and IRI will be involved in the upcoming elections as "they have a

long history of being a part of elections in Georgia and they would not want to miss this one either."

Degnan positively estimated Speaker Talakvadze's recent initiative to toughen the penalty for voter intimidation and other kinds of violations. She believes that any effort that is directed to eradicate problems that Georgia has seen repeatedly in its elections over the last thirty years (such as vote-buying, voter intimidation, abuse of administrative resources) is a step forward.

On the question about Russia's possible meddling into Georgia's elections considering the recent information that Kremlin funds Alliance of Patriots and how it can be prevented, the ambassador answered that Georgia should be ready for interference in the elections from Russia. She stressed the frequency and consistency of the disinformation campaigns ('not just related to the elections, but in general') and noted that the United States Embassy, as well as other international donors, are seeking to raise awareness among the Georgian

Politics

The president of Georgia announces the date of the elections

President Salome Zurbashvili has set the elections of the Parliament of Georgia and the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara.

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Public Defender welcomes the adoption of the Code of the Rights of the Child

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Economics

In July, the economy shrank by 5.5%

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Culture & Lifestyle

Classical Music Festival Night Serenades opens in Batumi

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public and help the community to learn how to tell the difference between fake and authentic information.

Degnan once again highlighted the importance of political leaders educating the voters about the information that is important to them, such as education, economic recovery, and health. She believes that "this is the way to ensure the voters go to the polls well-informed and ready to cast their ballots and the best way to push back against the disinformation from Russia or anywhere else."



2020 parliamentary elections in Georgia are scheduled on October 31st.

The president of Georgia announces the date of the elections



The president asks the citizens to keep the elections as peaceful as possible.

BY ANASTASIA SOKHADZE

With the decrees on calling the elections issued today, the President named October 31st as the date of the elections

and addressed the public.

“Today I signed the act of announcing the elections. The parliamentary elections in our country will be held on October 31st, as provided by our constitution.

I would like to address the public and urge you to conduct this period, these two months leading up to the elections, as peacefully as possible,” stated the President.

In today’s conditions, when the country has already gone through the Covid pandemic and quite a difficult year, it is necessary to prepare very calmly for the elections.

This election has a special meaning. According to the president, Georgia will reaffirm the democracy of our country.

Just like a few months ago, today the society has shown the world that it can manage such a severe epidemic and show with its high level of awareness that we are responsible citizens.

Zurbishvili believes that Georgia can hold the next elections democratically, peacefully and transparently.

30 years ago, on October 28th, 1990, Georgia held democratic elections even then. The tradition must be continued, must be strengthened and we should present ourselves to the world as an extremely democratic country.

The 2020 parliamentary elections will be held on the 120/30



Zurbishvili wants to strengthen and continue the transition of democratic elections.

formula. Georgian voters will elect 120 out of 150 deputies proportionally (instead of 77), and by majority - 30 (instead of 73). The 5% threshold required to enter parliament will be replaced

by a one-time 1%. Also, a 40% shutdown also means that a party that fails to get 40% of the votes will not be able to form a one-party majority in parliament.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Public Defender Nino Lomjaria published a statement regarding the Code of the Rights of the Child, Which enters into force on September 1st, 2020, and forms the basis for the protection of and support for the fundamental rights and freedoms of the child.

Public Defender welcomes the adoption of the code and stresses the importance of the efforts of state authorities for the enforcement of the code, especially against the background of systemic challenges in the direction of protecting and supporting the rights of children in Georgia.

The statement reads that according to the code when making a decision or taking measures in relation to children, “the supreme consideration of the best interests of the child and his/her opinion shall be mandatory,” in addition, the code sets the principles of preparation for

Public Defender welcomes the adoption of the Code of the Rights of the Child



Public Defender of Georgia, Nino Lomjaria.

independent living, development of family support systems, protection from violence, healthcare, and social protection, which should become the basis for the implementation of the state programs.

According to the Public Defender, in order to practically execute the principles declared in the code, it is important to revise the childcare and support system, also to plan timely and effective measures in response to the existing challenges, and to assure effective coordination between the responsible agencies.

The statement reads that the code defines the responsibilities of the Public Defender. According to the novelty, the mandate of the Public Defender is spread on the legal entities of private law, in the part of the implementation of protection and support measures provided by the code.

Public Defender states that for the effective supervision of the introduction of the code, Public Defender’s office has implemented significant measures, in particular, developed child-centered application forms in terms understandable for children,

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Weather

Tuesday, September 1

Day ☀️ Clear
High: 30°C
Night 🌙 Clear
Low: 19°C

Wednesday, September 2

Day ☁️ Partly Cloudy
High: 32°C
Night 🌧️ Mostly Cloudy
Low: 21°C

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In July, the economy shrank by 5.5%



According to Todradze, the downward trend in July was evident in almost all sectors except the mining and manufacturing industries.

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The National Statistics Office Geostat published preliminary estimates, according to which in July 2020, compared to the same period last year, the Georgian economy shrank by 5.5%. The average for the first 7 months of 2020 is -5.8%.

It is noteworthy that the pace of economic decline in recent months has been declining. In particular, the decline of the Georgian economy in April was -16.6%, in May -13.5%, and in June -7.7%.

Geostat also conducts monthly preliminary estimates of economic growth, which are calculated based on departmental statistics, in particular, turnover, fiscal and monetary data of VAT-paying enterprises.

According to the report, the

total turnover of VAT-paying enterprises in July reached ₾7.2 billion, which is a decrease of 3.9% compared to the same period last year.

A record decline in the turnover of VAT-paying enterprises was recorded in April, when the turnover decreased by 32.8% to ₾ 4.2 billion, in May the turnover decreased by 22.2% to ₾ 5.4 billion, and in June it decreased by 6.2% and the turnover of enterprises reached ₾ 6.5 billion.

Gogita Todradze, Executive Director of the National Statistics Office, spoke in detail about the factors contributing to the economic downturn.

He said the growth in the mining industry was related to the growth of non-ferrous metal ores. As for the positive trends in the manufacturing sector, it was mainly related to the in-

crease in the production of mineral fertilizers, beverages, tobacco and clothing.

There was a decline in all other sectors - despite the ongoing infrastructure projects in the construction sector, there was a declining trend in the construction of both residential and non-residential buildings.

Consequently, the volume of work related to the development of construction projects has been reduced. Also, in 7 months, the number of construction permits decreased by about 17% and the total area of permits decreased by 27%, while the number of commissioned facilities decreased by about 35%.

The decline in the transport sector was largely related to the functioning of air and rail transport, as well as the handling of freight transport and the reduc-



It should be noted that the statistics of newly registered enterprises had a decreasing trend during the year; The only exception was June, when 10.7% of new enterprises were registered, compared to the same period last year.

tion of the volume of related services.

In the hotels and restaurants sector, the decline in revenues was mainly due to a decrease in the number of international visitors which reduced by about 95%. In July 2020, a total of 46 000 visits were made by visitors, while in the corresponding period of last year, this figure exceeded 882 000. Consequently, the turnover of travel agencies, tour operators and booking companies decreased.

There was also a downward trend in the arts, entertainment and leisure sectors, mainly due to declining turnover of gambling companies, but also declining revenues from sports, entertainment, leisure and various cultural institutions.

According to Geostat, 3,935 units of new enterprises were registered in July, which is 5.2% less than in the same period last year.

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statistics of newly registered enterprises had a decreasing trend during the year; The only exception was June, when 10.7% of new enterprises were registered, compared to the same period last year.

A record 92.9% decline in new enterprise registrations was recorded in April. The main reason for this was the state of emergency declared in the country due to Covid-19.

As of the start of July 782,437 economic entities are registered in Georgia, 185,790 are active. According to the organizational-legal form, 43.5% of the active entities are limited liability companies, while 51.6% are individual entrepreneurs.

Geostat also released Criminal Statistics figures in July 2020. The criminal prosecutions were launched against a total of 1,933 persons in July (an increase of 9.3% compared to July 2019), including 34 juveniles.

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specified the issues of beneficiaries' informed consent and protection of confidentiality and made changes to the internal regulations of Public Defender's office, as well as to the rules of

Public Defender welcomes the adoption of the Code of the Rights of the Child

case proceedings and consideration of complaints/applications.

The statement reads that the Public Defender will actively

supervise the proper implementation of the Code on the Rights

of the Child by the responsible agencies and legal entities of private law.

Failing to comply with the legal demands of the Public Defender shall result in the imposition of responsibility under the Administrative Offences Code of Georgia.



The code of the Right of the Child comes into force on September 1st, 2020.

Classical Music Festival Night Serenades opens in Batumi



The festival Night Serenades opened for the 12th time in Batumi Ili Chavchavadze State Theater.

The first concert evening of the festival was attended by pianist Tata Licheli and Gia Kancheli Quartet.

The concert was broadcast live on Adjara Public Broadcaster.

Giorgi Issakadze, Artistic Director of Night Serenades, spoke

about the event:

“Due to the current situation in the world, foreign stars didn’t make it to the Night Serenades. Nevertheless, we wanted to not break the tradition, which was founded by the adored musician Liana Issakadze with all her creative impulse. Excellent works by Georgian composers have been created especially for our festival, which I am sure will

take a proper place in the Georgian musical treasure. Their premiere will take place during the Tbilisi evenings of the festival on September 2nd and 4th, thanks to the composers Giorgi Shaverzashvili and Sandro Nebieridze.

Excellent soloists are taking part in the festival this year: pianists Tata Licheli, Sandro Nebieridze, Elene Shaverzashvili and Liza Chkhaidze; Gia Kancheli String Quartet; The basic orchestra of the festival Georgian Virtuosos.

As always, we tried to present a rich, genre-diverse program. Unusual works by Haydn, Beethoven, Sibelius, Grig, Dvorak, Janachek, Vakhtang Matchavariani and Jimsher Chkhaidze will be performed at the festival.

Many thanks to the director of the festival Nina Tzagareli, the main conductor of the festival, the excellent maestro Vakhtang Matchavariani, the Public Broadcaster of Adjara, for broadcasting the opening ceremony of the festival live.

This year’s festival is dedicated to the 95th anniversary of Georgian composer and teacher Sul Khan Tsintsadze.”

Supporters of the XII Batumi-Tbilisi International Festival Night Serenades are: Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia, Batumi City Hall; Tbilisi City Hall; Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara.

The event is organized by the company Art Alliance. The official insurer of the festival is the company Ardi.

ღამის სერენადები
NIGHT SERENADES
 ფესტივალის დამფუძნებელი ლიანა ისაკაძე
 Founder of the Festival LIANA ISSAKADZE
 სამხატვრო ხელმძღვანელი შიორში ისაკაძე
 Artistic Director GIORGI ISSAKADZE
 მთავარი დირიჟორი ვახტანგ მატჩავარიანი
 Principal Conductor VAKHTANG MATCHAVARIANI
ბათუმი BATUMI
AUGUST 27
აგვისტო
 ილია ჩაუჩავაძის სახელობის დრამატული თეატრი
 ILIA CHAVCHAVADZE DRAMA THEATER



Partners include the German Embassy, Batumi Ili Chavchavadze Drama Theater; Leno Records; PSP Company,

Festival Night Serenades was founded by Liana Isakadze in 1983 in Abkhazia, Georgia.

the exclusive distributor of world trendy premium brands in Georgia; Wine company Georgian Unique Wine; Company Sarajishvili; Perfume store chain Lutecia, Aromateka.



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