

## Opinion & Analysis

Saakashvili's promised return to Georgia and controversy over Russian funding of Patriots Alliance

FULL STORY ON Page 2

## Politics

German Development Cooperation supports Akhaltsikhe municipality in revitalization of former military base

FULL STORY ON Page 3

## Economics

FDI in Q2 reached \$237.8 mln



FULL STORY ON Page 3

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The registration process for political parties for the 2020 parliamentary elections has been completed. The Central Election Commission (CEC) released a statement, according to which the registration process for political parties in Georgia for the October Parliamentary Elections was completed on September 4<sup>th</sup>.

CEC notes that out of 78 parties that applied for registration, 12 were rejected, and 66 parties have been successfully registered to run for the upcoming elections.

Political parties and electoral blocs are now required to present proportional party lists to the CEC chairperson and majoritarian candidates in electoral districts, before October 1<sup>st</sup>. Thus the process of reviewing and registering the party lists will begin.

On October 26<sup>th</sup> the CEC will release final/corrected data on the total number of voters and their breakdown by electoral districts. Election Day is on October 31<sup>st</sup>.

For November 11<sup>th</sup>, electoral district commissions will have summarized the results of both majoritarian and proportional polls; results must be submitted to CEC no later than the following day. In case of a repeat vote, the last day for holding it is November 14<sup>th</sup>. For November 19<sup>th</sup> – CEC summarizes proportional vote tallies. If needed a second round of elections should be set on November 21<sup>st</sup>. If not, CEC announces the final results. Runoffs for majoritarian races, if there

## 66 political parties registered for upcoming parliamentary elections



"The fact of involvement of a foreign citizen in the pre-election campaign has not been confirmed yet," Mikeladze said yesterday morning.

are any, will be held on November 21<sup>st</sup>. If the runoffs are held December 10 is the deadline for summarizing final results.

"Our position is that the voters in the quarantine areas should have the opportunity to participate in the elections, but the decision has not been made yet," CEC spokesperson Ana Mikeladze said at a briefing on September 8. According to her, it is important that the elections are held in a safe environment for health.

According to the new amendments to the election legislation, it is the CEC that makes the decision to hold or not to hold elections in quarantine zones or quarantine areas.

"The fact of involvement of a foreign citizen in the pre-election campaign has not been confirmed yet," Mikeladze said in response to a question about Mikheil Saakashvili.

The law states that a foreign citizen

has no right to participate in the pre-election campaign. As Mikeladze noted, if there is a similar fact, the election administration will act in accordance with the law.

"Since the official start of the election campaign, the involvement of a foreign citizen in it is prohibited by law," said Elene Nizharadze, Executive Director of ISFED.

Ex-president of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili has been nominated as the prime ministerial candidate of the United National Movement and 'Strength in Unity. As Saakashvili announced, he will arrive in Georgia "in conditions that won't cause controversy and some kind of unrest" and take the post of the PM for 2 years only.

The former President, deprived of his Georgian nationality, now holds Ukrainian citizenship. In May, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy appointed him as the chairman of Ukraine's Executive Reform Committee. Saakashvili left the country shortly after the end of his second term in 2013. He is wanted on multiple charges in Georgia, which he denies as politically motivated.

Yesterday, Shalva Natelashvili announced that Saakashvili's candidacy for Prime Minister will not be considered in the global aspect of the opposition consultation format.



A total of 78 parties applied to the CEC for the right to participate in the Georgian parliamentary elections.



# Saakashvili's promised return to Georgia and controversy over Russian funding of Patriots Alliance

By MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

President Zurabishvili officially called parliamentary elections for October 31<sup>st</sup>, thus officially launching the election campaign. The last few days have been full of scandalous events. Among them are Mikheil Saakashvili's statement on his return to Georgia and the scandalous facts related to the Patriots Alliance:

Exposed Russian funding; arrival of party leaders in occupied Abkhazia and Batumi with election banners and maps of Georgia on which Adjara was marked with the same colour as the other occupied territories, with arrows showing the threat coming from Turkey.

Georgia's third president, Mikheil Saakashvili, announced his return to Georgia on social media on August 27<sup>th</sup>, posting a special clip on the issue, apologizing for past mistakes, saying he now sees everything clearly and can save the country from Ivanishvili's rule. This speech of Saakashvili, naturally, was followed by a great agitation.

Saakashvili's possible arrival provoked mixed reactions from

both the opposition and experts. According to many, this will be an attempt to turn Georgian politics into a bipolar one again, with Ivanishvili on one side and Saakashvili on the other. Opposition parties claiming to be "third forces" will be shut down, and the government will again try to intimidate some voters by sending Saakashvili back to Georgia.

It is expected that the "National Movement" will nominate Mikheil Saakashvili as its candidate for Prime Minister. Some think it would be a wrong move and that the main opposition party should choose a candidate. According to others, if the National Movement needs Saakashvili to receive more votes, it should do so.

The fact that he is a Ukrainian citizen and is sentenced in Georgia, prevents Saakashvili from returning to Georgia and possibly becoming prime minister. Today, Saakashvili will be arrested if he returns, but after the election, if its results do not satisfy the opposition, the government will be accused of rigging the election and protests will start. In this case,

Saakashvili's possible appearance will become a serious problem for the Georgian Dream.

The main scandalous figure of last week was the Alliance of Patriots. The party has been rumored to be pro-Russian since its inception, but documents have recently circulated that the Patriots Alliance is funded directly by the Kremlin (\$8 million 430 thousand). The documents were released on August 24<sup>th</sup> by the Dossier Center, a Russian investigative project founded by Kremlin critic Mikhail Khadarkovsky. His report describes in detail the network that is engaged in relations with the Patriots Alliance.

On August 27<sup>th</sup>, the United National Movement demanded the withdrawal of the Patriots Alliance from the parliamentary elections. The opposition has spoken of Russia's direct interference in Georgia's election campaign, saying the Patriots Alliance is a Russian project and is acting against Georgia's national interests.

Earlier, on August 20<sup>th</sup>, it was reported that the leaders of the Patriots Alliance, Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi and Irma

Inashvili, had crossed into occupied Abkhazia on August 18 for religious purposes in the Ochamchire district. An icon of the Virgin Mary was brought to St. George's Church.

This trip was, of course, a part of the election campaign (emphasis on the union with Abkhazia) and could not have taken place without Moscow's intervention. The announcement of this fact was followed by a dissatisfied reaction of the separatist forces in Abkhazia and the Abkhazian Orthodox Church rejected the icon gifted by the Alliance of Patriots.

The election banners placed by the Patriots Alliance in Adjara turned out to be even more scandalous. On the map of Georgia shown on the banner, Adjara was depicted as the occupied territories and indicated the threat coming from Turkey.

These banners were followed by protests from the pro-Western opposition, which the Georgian Dream described as a "provocation against the country" and the banners were removed from the relevant agency. Irma Inashvili herself declared the incident a provocation of the

National Movement, saying they "had ordered other types of banners."

It has also become clear that the government is not going to withdraw the Patriots Alliance from the elections and does not consider the published documents as a sufficient basis for that. The prosecution refused to consider the matter. The pro-Western opposition views the Georgian Dream and the Patriots Alliance as a united force, leaving the country under Russian influence.

If the "Alliance of Patriots" is openly pro-Russian, the "Georgian Dream" has declared a Western orientation, but will not take real steps in this direction. The Georgian Dream declares the National Movement and Saakashvili a pro-Russian force. It is clear that the main confrontation between the ongoing election campaign will unfold between Western and pro-Russian forces. The election campaign will be full of "dark PR" and will cover many scandalous events.

(Translated from Georgian by Mariam Mchedlidze)

## German Development Cooperation supports Akhaltsikhe municipality in revitalization of former military base

On behalf of the German Development Cooperation, the Good Governance for Local Development in South Caucasus (GGLD) Programme implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) concluded a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Akhaltsikhe municipality. Mr. Zaza Melikidze, the mayor of Akhaltsikhe municipality and Dr. Christoph Beier, the director of GGLD Programme signed the document.

The MoU foresees cooperation in various aspects. Akhaltsikhe Municipality will get support in elaboration of a concept for redevelopment of the former military



base and in terms of demolition of the dilapidated buildings on the territory. It is planned to convert the territory into multifunctional recreational area.

"Abandoned and nonfunctional military base has been hindering the urban development in Akhaltsikhe for a long period of time. Last year, part of the territory of the former military base was transferred into the ownership of Akhaltsikhe municipality. We want to revitalize this territory and ensure its integration into Akhaltsikhe urban system. This will significantly improve livability of the city and foster local development. With this purpose, we plan to actively cooperate with the German Development Cooperation" – said Mr. Zaza Melikidze, the mayor of Akhaltsikhe municipality.

CONTINUED ON Page 3

### Weather

Wednesday, September 9

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 29°C

Night Mostly Clear

Low: 18°C

Thursday, September 10

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 30°C

Night Clear

Low: 18°C

published by

The Messenger

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All contributions should be submitted by e-mail.

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 3.0890; Euro - 3.6429; GBP - 4.0277; 100 Russian Ruble - 4.0447; Swiss Franc - 3.3646

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

## FDI in Q2 reached \$237.8 mln

The National Statistic Office of Georgia (Geostat) released the preliminary data on September 8, according to which the foreign direct investment in Georgia reached \$ 237.8 million in the second quarter of 2020, over 38% increase compared to \$171.8 mln in the first quarter of 2020.

The amount of the FDI in Q2 2020 is 0,5% up compared with the same period last year, however, the sum of the FDI during the first two quarters of 2020 saw over 25% decrease as compared to the first half of 2019.

As for the sectors, the largest share of FDI was registered in the financial sector, reaching \$78.1 million in Q2 2020, the energy sector was second (\$29.6 million), followed by the construction sector (\$27.7 million).

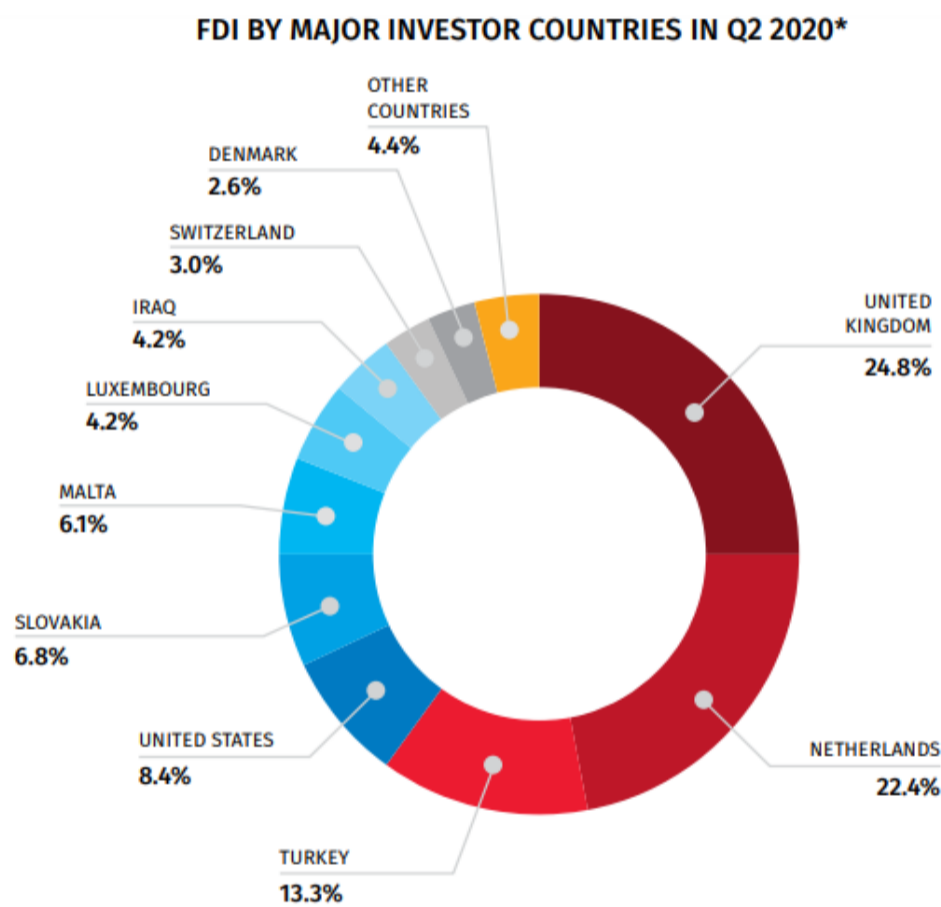
The UK holds the biggest share of the FDI in Georgia with 24.8% in Q2 2020, followed by Netherlands (22.4%) and Turkey (13.3%).

Georgian Economy Minister Natia Turnava says that the increased rate of foreign direct investment in the second quarter of 2020 proves that despite the pandemic the Georgian economy is gradually recovering.

“The increase in reinvestment indicates that foreign investors are not making a profit from Georgia, but leaving it in the country and creating new jobs,” Turnava commented concerning the growth of foreign direct investment in the second quarter of 2020 that was mainly due to the increase in reinvestment. The volume of reinvestment in the second quarter of 2020 increased by 63.5% and amounted to \$144.7 million which ac-



According to the 6-month statistics, foreign investments in Georgia are at a 10-year minimum.



“The positive dynamics are taking place against the background of the global pandemic when international experts predict a 40% drop in investment globally,” Turnava said.

counted for 60.8 % of total foreign direct investment.

“If we look at the structure of foreign direct investment, reinvestment prevails. This means that not only new investments are coming in, but already existing investors are so confident in the Georgian economy and its future that they are expanding their production and profits, which they receive in Georgia,” Turnava noted.

According to Beka Liluashvili, the prime minister’s advisor for economics, the increase in foreign direct investments indicates that investors trust Georgia’s economic policy.

“While the economy declined by 7.7% in June we saw that in July the economy shrank 5.5%, meaning that the economy has already moved to a recovery phase after stabilisation,” he added.

International investment location scouts from leading European and US companies KPMG, Conway, and GDP Global are visiting Georgia for the first time to discover the country’s investment potential and state programs oriented towards industrial development.

“Notwithstanding the ongoing global challenges, we have managed to bring highly experienced and skilled investment location consultants to Georgia. I am happy that we have made this first, very important step forward following our strategy and action plan”, Mikheil Khidureli, Enterprise Georgia CEO said.

According to him, to attract foreign investment to Georgia and popularize the country’s investment potential, partnering with location consultants represents one of the main directions for the agency.

## German Development Cooperation supports Akhaltsikhe municipality in revitalization of former military base

CONTINUED FROM Page 2

Since 1992, with the funding of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), GIZ has been actively supporting Georgia in the areas of good governance and democracy, sustainable economic development as well as environment and climate change,

among other areas. On April 1, 2020, the new regional technical assistance programme GGLD implemented by GIZ was launched. Being a strategic partner to the MRDI and the Ministry of Finance of Georgia, GIZ continues its assistance to foster citizen oriented local self-governance and regional development reforms in Georgia.

