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CEC approves final results of elections, opposition leaves session in protest



► "Political desire should not break the independent election administration" Zhvania announced.

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The Central Election Commission has approved the final results of the 2020 parliamentary elections. CEC Chairperson Tamar Zhvania signed the election summary protocol. The session was accompanied by the protests of the opposition and civil activists. Representatives of the United National Movement - Davit Kirtadze, European Georgia - Davit Gurgenzidze and the Alliance of Patriots - Khatuna Skhirtladze left the sitting in protest.

Gurgenzidze posted a sign on the wall with the CEC logo: "Elections are rigged!" Zhvania recalled that Kirtadze and Gurgenzidze did the same after the 2016 parliamentary elections, and despite accusations of the opposition, the elected parliament (9th convocation) operated for 4 years.

The CEC chairperson once again reminded us that the issue of legitimizing the 2020 parliamentary elections has not been put on the agenda by international partners.

According to Zhvania, everyone counted the votes together. Not only the members of the commission were present, but procedurally the representatives of the election subject also counted the votes together with the members of the commission and they participated in the counting process. These protocols are drawn up jointly, by all.

She also announced the message to any election administration, saying 'no specific political demands and no specific political aspirations should be able to break the independent election administration'.

According to the CEC, as a result of the



► "CEC will put an end to the final falsification of these elections and all ways to change the results will be formally closed, a political crisis will be signed," Kapanadze said amid final approval of 2020 parliamentary election results.

elections, the votes were finally distributed as follows: Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia - 48.22% proportional number of seats - 60. At the same time, according to the CEC results, Georgian Dream won the second round with in all 30 majoritarian constituencies and has a total of 90 seats.

The remaining 60 seats are divided into 8 opposition parties. National Movement-Power is in unity - 27.18%, number of seats - 36; European Georgia - 3.79%, number of seats - 5; Strategy Builder - 3.15% Number of seats - 4

Try - 3.15%, number of mandates - 4; Alliance of Patriots - 3.14%, number of seats - 4

Girchi - 2.89%, number of seats - 4; Citizens - 1.33%, number of seats - 2; Labor

Party - 1% Number of seats - 1.

On November 21, the second round of the October 31 parliamentary elections in Georgia was formally held in the 17 constituencies where none of the candidates was able to cross the threshold. However, all the opposition parties, whose candidates are to run in the second round, have boycotted the elections, as well as entering parliament. According to the Central Election Commission, 100% of the votes have been counted. In fact, the Georgian Dream candidate won the single-party elections in all 17 constituencies.

The announcement of the results of the October 31, 2020 parliamentary elections was met with protests from opposition parties and voters. All opposition parties have

boycotted the election results and none of them is included in the 10th convocation of the Georgian Parliament. The general demands of the opposition are: Tamar Zhvania's resignation, early, free elections and the release of all political prisoners.

Note that the issue of receiving funding was brought up following opposition's protest. On 2nd of December CEC announced that the deadline for parties to send their answers regarding funding has expired and according to official letters of consent, despite boycott all parties that overcame the barrier agreed to receive budget funding for the party, except Girchi and Citizens.

Now the date of the first sitting of the 10th convocation parliament must be announced by the President of Georgia within 10 days. However, holding the first sitting still does not mean acquiring the full powers of the new parliament and recognizing the elected powers of the elected persons.

At the first sitting, the newly elected Parliament is authorized to start working if the majority of the full membership of the Parliament (at least 76 deputies) is present. But the parliament will acquire full power only after the recognition of the powers of two thirds of the members of the parliament (100 deputies) (and from this moment the power is terminated by the parliament of the previous convocation as well). The sitting will be adjourned if the authority of 100 deputies is not recognized; The next sitting is convened by the CEC chairperson within 10 days from the moment when it will be possible to fill the number of authorized deputies up to 100.

Georgian public servants receive protective equipment to cope with COVID-19

UNDP HELPS 8,000 FRONTLINE STATE AND MUNICIPAL WORKERS STAY SAFE DURING THE PANDEMIC

TBILISI. 2 December 2020 – Amidst an upsurge in COVID-19 cases in Georgia, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provided USD 99,000 worth of masks, gowns and other protective gear to the Government to equip 8,000 public-sector workers who need to stay safe while performing their duties. The supplies will be distributed to personnel of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA), the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) and the National Centre for Disease Control and Public Health (NCDC), as well as to municipal staff in all regions of Georgia who continue to perform their duties despite the new restrictive measures imposed on 28

November to fight the spread of the virus.

The protective gear was transferred to the Administration of the Government today by UNDP Head Louisa Vinton at a socially distanced ceremony hosted by Lela Akiashvili, the Prime Minister’s Advisor on Human Rights and Gender Equality, and attended by MIA Deputy Minister Nino Tsatsiashvili, MEPA Deputy Minister Nino Tandilashvili and Otar Nami-cheishvili, Head of the Finance-Economic Department at NCDC.

The equipment provided by UNDP today includes 15,000 face masks, 3,000 face shields, 3,500 protective gowns, gloves, disinfection barriers, disinfectants and hand sanitizers. The

aim is to ensure that at-risk public-sector workers outside the medical system enjoy physical protection as they undertake vital client-facing responsibilities. Earlier in the pandemic, UNDP provided the United Water Supply Company with protective gear for around 1,000 frontline staff responsible for maintaining municipal water supplies.

“Working from home is just not a possibility for thousands of public-sector workers,” said Vinton. “Our efforts are dedicated to ensuring that national and municipal civil servants can continue to deliver essential services to their clients and their communities while reducing the risk of infection.”

Today’s deliveries are part

of a USD 1 million UN joint programme designed to support Georgia in mitigating the consequences of the pandemic. It is funded by the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund and implemented by UNDP jointly with UNICEF and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA).

Other UNDP initiatives supporting the COVID response include equipping municipal shelters for elderly and homeless persons; providing supplies to vulnerable internally displaced persons living in 100 collective centres; distributing 23,000 locally produced face shields to civil servants and medical personnel in 64 municipalities; providing hot meals and home care services to 5,715 fragile elderly

persons living in remote locations; installing GPS-equipped dashboards at the 144 COVID-19 emergency call centre; providing agricultural inputs to 500 women-headed households seeking to expand their farms as a COVID coping strategy; and delivering hygienic, sanitary and medical commodities to health-care facilities that serve conflict-affected communities, including ten shipments of urgent supplies to the Abkhazia region.

Funding for UNDP activities has come from all its development partners: Austria, Denmark, the European Union, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK and the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

An inclusive society is key to a robust COVID-19 recovery

TBILISI. 3 December 2020 – On the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) reiterates its strong commitment to assist Georgia in building an inclusive society in which all citizens – without exception – can exercise their fundamental human rights, enjoy equal access to public services and participate fully in the life of their communities.

Persons with disabilities form a sizable share of any society. Only 3 percent of the Georgian population is officially registered as having a disability, but the actual share is estimated at around 15 percent. Long stigmatized and pushed into the shadows, persons with disabilities are gaining voice and agency.

Georgia has made strong legal commitments to protect the rights of persons with disabilities. The country ratified the landmark UN Convention on disability in 2014 and passed a long-awaited national Law



on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in July 2020. This legislation reflects a shift from the “medical model,” which views disability as an illness to be treated, to the “social model,” which shifts responsibility to societies to find ways to accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities.

“Promoting inclusion for persons with disabilities means recognizing and protecting their rights,” said the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in a

statement for the International Day. “These rights touch on every aspect of life: the right to go to school, to live in one’s community, to access health care, to start a family, to engage in political participation, to be able to play sport, to travel – and to have decent work.”

The Georgian public is increasingly recognizing these rights. As documented in new UNDP research, large majorities of Georgians agree that persons with physical disabilities can

perform well in education and employment and as decision-makers at all levels, for example in the Parliament. Unfortunately, acceptance drops dramatically for persons with mental or intellectual disabilities. Less than half would want someone with a mental or intellectual impairment as a co-worker, neighbour or classmate to their children. Most believe people with mental disabilities should not have children.

“We salute Georgia for its

commitment to full social inclusion,” said UNDP Head Louisa Vinton. “But there is still a long way to go to translate this resolve into tangible improvements in the lives of persons with disabilities. COVID-19 has thrown up new obstacles on this road, and we call on the authorities and citizens alike to ensure that the pandemic does not put persons with disabilities into jeopardy. At UNDP, we strongly believe that a more inclusive society will see a swifter post-COVID recovery.”

UNDP has been helping to protect disability rights in Georgia for more than a decade. This work has included ensuring that persons with disabilities have access to public spaces such as the Public Service Hall and the Parliament and can make full use of public services. This effort has intensified during the pandemic. UNDP helped to customize COVID-19 information for persons with disabilities; ensured that all Government briefings were translated into sign language; provided online counselling and peer-to-peer support to staff and residents of institutions for persons with mental disability; and delivered care packages and provided home care to thousands of elderly people, many of whom have disabilities.

FRIDAY		DECEMBER 4	
Day		Cloudy	
		High: 8°C	
Night		Cloudy	
		Low: 4°C	
SATURDAY		DECEMBER 5	
Day		Rain	
		High: 7°C	
Night		Rain	
		Low: 4°C	

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Trace International: Georgia ranks first in the world in terms of freedom from corruption in business relations

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The Trace International Index of Freedom from Corruption Risk, Georgia ranks 28th in the world and 19th in Europe, according to the Georgian Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development. In the 2020 Trace Matrix 'Corruption Risk Matrix' rating, Georgia's rating improved by one point compared to the previous year and ranked 28th out of 194 countries with 25 points, and 6th among 50 countries in the Asian region.

Georgia is ahead of 14 EU countries, including Italy, Spain and Latvia. The countries are rated according to the level of corruption, namely the possibility of corruption, anti-corruption legislation, government transparency and the level of civil society development. The rating evaluates the country according to 4 components, which in turn include 9 sub-components.

Georgia received the highest rating in a key subcomponent such as Freedom from Corruption in Government Relations - in this aggregate, Georgia ranks first in the world.

"We are the best in the world in terms of interaction between business and government. This practically means that businesses do not need to have physical contact with government agencies and public officials employed there to use our programs, our assistance, certain government services and to obtain permits," the Minister of Economy Natia Turnava said.

The minister underscored that there are unified front offices throughout the country, which are maximally digitized and electronic.

According to the methodology, each country is assigned an overall corruption risk score and each area is rated from 1 to 100 points, with 1 point indicating a



► TRACE is a world-renowned business association that studies and evaluates the quality of corruption, oversight, good governance and third party involvement in risk management. The rating is based on various authoritative ratings and reports.

low level / absence of corruption and a 100 point indicating a high risk of corruption.

In the business relations component with the government, Georgia has 17 points, which is based on the low level of corruption in the relationship with the government (1 point), low expectations of corruption (35 points) and low regulatory burden (28 points).

"Georgia is ahead of countries such as Canada, Japan, Luxembourg, Ireland, USA, Austria, Belgium, France, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, neighboring countries, etc. in this indicator," the Ministry of Economy said.

According to them, Georgia has 39 points in the anti-corruption legislation and enforcement component, which is based on



► Gocha Lortkipanidze says Trace International rating indicates the country's progress in a period full of challenges.

the very high quality of anti-corruption legislation (36 points) and the moderate quality of law enforcement (42 points). Georgia is ahead of France, Malta, Romania, Latvia, Armenia, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Hungary, Turkey, Moldova, Russia, etc. in the indicator.

According to them, Georgia has 26 points in the "Government and Civil Service Transparency" component, which is based on a transparent government (27 points) and a healthy, transparent civil service (24 points). Georgia is ahead of Italy, Israel, Malta, Czech Republic, Greece, Poland, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Croatia, Romania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Turkey, etc. in this indicator.

As for the Civil Society Skills Supervision component, Georgia has been awarded with 28 points based on a high level of press freedom (24 points) and a high degree of civil society development (34 points).

The four components of the rating have been assigned the appropriate weights, namely, the weight of the corruption opportunity component is the highest at 40%, containment equals 15%, transparency 22.5% and oversight 22.5%.

The Acting Minister of Justice of Georgia, Gocha Lortkipanidze underscored that rating indicates that the continuation of the Georgian government is positively assessed in the field of anti-corruption efforts.

"It is precisely this policy, coordination and inter-agency effort that is an important tool and mechanism for the Anti-Corruption Council, chaired by the Ministry of Justice. It is important to note that this rating indicates the country's progress in a period full of challenges and the consolidation of institutional democracy in the country," Lortkipanidze said.

Virus of Indifference Kills - UN Women's Online Campaign against Gender-Based and Domestic Violence

The virus of indifference kills - an online multimedia campaign against violence against women and domestic violence has been kicked off by UN Women with European Union support.

The campaign is a part of the 16 Days of Global Activism against Gender-Based Violence. Along with awareness-raising visual materials, there were 4 audioplays produced within its framework, the authors of which are Georgian writers Nestan Nene Kvinikadze and Lasha Bughadze. The plays describe various forms of violence against women and domestic vio-

lence, with scenes and situations as close to reality as possible.

According to the National Study on Violence against Women in Georgia released jointly by UN Women and the National Statistics Office in 2017 with financial support from the EU, one in seven women reported having experienced domestic violence in their lifetime. The study findings show that 41% of population believe that cases of domestic violence should not be disclosed. Based on these findings both the audio plays and the campaign itself, target society at large, as far as the communities can often save the lives of

women if they respond correctly. This stands true especially now, when the restrictions and isolation caused by COVID-19 have further heightened the threat of violence against girls and women. The society plays a special role in this situation, which should not remain indifferent to the cases of violence that may occur, for example, behind the door of a neighbor, friend, or just an acquaintance.

The campaign is part of the project "Ending Violence against Women and Girls in Georgia", which is implemented by UN Women in cooperation with UNFPA, with the financial sup-

port of the European Union. The project aims to develop policies and legislation needed to prevent and respond to the domestic violence and the violence against women, as well as to build the capacity of relevant institutions. At the same time, it the project will aims to change negative gender stereotypes, social norms and attitudes within the society, to support the women's rights and promote gender equality.

16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence has been marked since the early 1990s. It aims at raising public awareness and demonstrating solidarity with the victims of

gender-based violence. This year, the campaign highlights the "shadow pandemic" that followed the spread of COVID-19: after imposing the restrictions on movement and isolation, the number of reported cases of all forms of violence against girls and women, especially domestic violence, has increased. UN Women joins the violence survivors, activists, decision-makers, the UN system and representatives of all walks of life to highlight the need for funding, essential services, prevention and data to provide a more informed response to violence against girls and women.