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2/3 of the money is a direct grant

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BY NIKA GAMTSEMLIDZE

The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy, ISFED, has recently published a statement about the adjusted results of parallel vote tabulation, PVT. According to the updated and adjusted outcome of the parallel vote count, Georgian Dream has received 47.6% of all votes. Previously, according to ISFED's count, the ruling party had received 45.8%.

The final results for other political parties have changed as well. According to ISFED, the United National Movement

# ISFED adjusts Election vote count, opposition continues to protest



# ISFED

სამართლიანი არჩევნებისა და დემოკრატიის საერთაშორისო საზოგადოება

According to the updated and adjusted outcome of the parallel vote count, Georgian Dream has received 47.6%

has received 27.4% (previously ISFED said it was 26.4%), European Georgia 3.8% (previously 3.7), Alliance of Patriots 3.2% (previously 3.1%), Girchi 3% (previously 2.8%), etc.

ISFED published its special statement on December 11. The statement noted that considering the high public interest, the organization has conducted a preliminary audit of their results. The audit shows that the PVT methodology and credibility of the information was accurate, however, there were technical flaws that resulted in different numbers.

The statement reads that there was a problem with the vole calculation formula. ISFED said that the formula counted the number of invalid ballots along with the votes that were received by the electoral subjects.

ISFED also noted in the statement read that although the percentage points were slightly changed, it does not affect the mandates secured by the electoral

subjects.

"We would like to reiterate that ISFED conducted comprehensive monitoring of the entire election process. Based on its findings, the organization believes that the 2020 election was of the lowest standard compared to other polls conducted in the last few years," reads the statement of the organization.

Irakli Kobakhidze, one of the leaders of the Georgian Dream ruling party said that the previous numbers shown by the ISFED were one of the main reasons for the allegation of electoral fraud by the opposition parties of Georgia. Kobakhidze added that now that the numbers have been corrected, the accuracy of the elections can be once again proved.

One of the leaders of the political party Girchi, Zurab Japaridze, said that the results of ISFED do not demonstrate the

irregularities that could have affected the outcome of the 2020 election.

On December 11, the 10th convocation of the parliament of Georgia holds the first session following the elections. Out of the 9 political parties that were voted into the parliament, only one, Georgian Dream, attended the session. Out of 8 opposition parties, five have signed a memorandum that does not recognize the results of the 2020 elections and refuse to take up the mandates.

The Ambassadors of the United States and European Union in Georgia, who are negotiating the talks between the opposition and the ruling party, said in a joint statement that they regret it was not possible to reach a broad-based agreement before the first convocation.

The talks between the political parties will continue in the future as well.



ISFED published the statement on December 11



On December 11, the 10th convocation of the parliament of Georgia holds the first session following the elections

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

## Georgian Dream Parliament starts operating

The confrontation between the government and the opposition culminated before the opening of the new parliament. The Georgian Dream appears to have managed to have broken up the unity of the opposition - several boycotted opposition figures intend to enter parliament.

The Georgian Dream will no longer be alone in Parliament. It immediately tightened its grip on the opposition remaining in the boycott regime, primarily the National Movement and opposition TV channels.

Even though the Georgian Dream won 90 seats in the next Parliament and came to power for a third term, the boycott of the opposition created discomfort - a one-party parliament failed to create a democratic landscape for the current government.

That is why the Georgian Dream party agreed to negotiate through the mediation of the US and EU ambassadors. The negotiations between the government and the opposition were not open to the public for a total of five rounds held. The two main demands of the opposition - holding new parliamentary elections and releasing political prisoners - were categorically unacceptable to the government.

Instead, he made promises to

reform the electoral system of the electoral system. Periodically, it was reported that in parallel with the ongoing negotiations mediated by the ambassadors, the Georgian Dream was behind the scenes trying to reach a deal with the boycotted opposition, who was under both promises and pressure. This pressure was a severe test for the unity of the opposition.

The behind-the-scenes negotiations seem to have paid off. On December 8th, Irakli Okruashvili, the leader of one of the opposition parties, said for the first time that he had information that "up to seven MPs from the opposition are entering parliament. They enter not on the first day, but slowly." This statement was responded to by others and caused great consternation in the media and opposition circles. Some suggested that several members of Girchi and Strategy Builder, as well as Aleko Elisashvili's Citizens, were going to enter Parliament. This was followed by terrible outrage among the appointees and once again underscored the unity of the opposition in the issue of the

boycott of Parliament. Giorgi Vashadze called the rumors about entering the Parliament 'shameless speculations,' while Aleko Elisashvili said that those who accused him of entering the parliament were 'just rude.'

However, the next day, Aleko Elisashvili was the first one from the opposition to say he agreed to enter Parliament if the government agreed to reform election legislation and the election administration. This was followed by the statement of the members of Girchi that electoral reform is a priority for them as well. The opposition considered entering the parliament in the name of electoral system reform as a weak argument. According to Nino Burjanadze, entering the parliament in the name of 'illusory electoral reform' is a refusal to join the opposition and join the Georgian Dream. He said that the fluctuation of individuals from the opposition would not greatly harm the unity of the opposition.

The government is trying to divide the boycotted opposition into two parts. Some see the newly formed parties (Girchi,

Citizens) as constructive, as do the opposition, which will enter parliament on an 'individual basis.' The second part is called 'radical opposition,' which is united by 'rebellion against the democratic constitution' and 'parliamentary sabotage' is a tool to achieve this goal. The 'radical opposition' has been declared an anti-Western and pro-Russian force. This accusation is especially ridiculous for the opposition, because it was made by a representative of the 'Russian oligarch' party, who buried the Anaklia project, and on June 20, 2019, introduced Russian MP Gavrilov in the Georgian parliament and brutally dispersed people gathered in protest.

One day before the opening of the parliament, one of the leaders of the Georgian Dream, Irakli Kobakhidze, held a briefing and announced what they were going to do in the first parliament - threatened to boycott the remaining parties by amending the law and canceling budget funding. - The main opposition party has threatened to disband the United National Movement because its leader is Mikheil

Saakashvili (a "foreign citizen" and a "convicted person in court in Georgia"). He also declared 'three opposition TV stations' as 'destructive.'

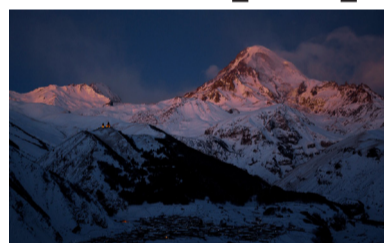
With this speech, Irakli Kobakhidze ended the negotiations with the opposition, although the 5th round of negotiations was still ahead. The opposition gathered at Lelo's office described Kobakhidze's speech as a statement by the Georgian Dream about future repression and the 'establishment of a one-party oligarchic dictatorship.'

Irakli Kobakhidze's toughened tone, according to some experts, is a sign that the Georgian Dream has already agreed to allow several opposition members to enter parliament. However, it is known how many oppositionists the Dream needs to enter parliament - as it has 90 seats, at least 10 of the 60-member opposition boycotters must agree to enter parliament to bring the number of parliamentarians to 100 and make up two-thirds of the 150-member parliament.

Everything will become clear after December 11, when it will be clear who will enter the parliament of the 10<sup>th</sup> convocation.

*(Translated from Georgian by Mariam Mchedlidze)*

## On International Mountain Day, UNDP highlights the importance of highlands for people and the environment



**Economic challenges and environmental hazards are some of the reasons behind depopulation and exodus of youth from the highlands**

Spectacular mountains occupy 65 percent of Georgia's territory, providing the country with priceless resources of clean energy and water and ideal locations for farming, recreation and tourism. But highland residents face high rates of poverty and high risks from the devastating weather extremes that come with climate change. This

year, International Mountain Day stresses the importance of highlands as a bountiful yet delicate shelter for both humans and nature.

Working closely with the Government, communities and development partners, including Switzerland and Austria, UNDP is helping to address the economic, environmental and social challenges faced by Georgia's highlands and create policies and programmes aiming at preserving and developing these unique regions.

"Starting with majestic Kazbegi, mountains are the defining visual image for Georgia," said UNDP Head Louisa Vinton. "The people who live in Georgia's highlands are hardy and resilient by nature. But they need support to protect their livelihoods and their natural surroundings. UNDP is working to ensure that this distinctive feature of Georgian culture can survive and thrive."

"Highland development is a priority for the Government of Georgia, building on successful examples from our partner countries," said Deputy Minister of

Regional Development and Infrastructure Mzia Giorgobiani. "We pay particular attention to ensuring access to services, economic activities and decision-making for people living in mountainous municipalities. Mountains are the natural, cultural, economic and social heritage of Georgia. They must be cherished and protected."

Economic challenges and environmental hazards are some of the reasons behind depopulation and exodus of youth from the highlands - half of all settlements of Georgia are located in high mountain areas but only 9.7 percent of the country's 3.7 million people live there. To counter the deprivation and boost economic growth, UNDP runs a robust USD 5.5 million regional and local development programme supported by Switzerland and Austria, with a special focus on mountainous regions.

"Switzerland, as a mountainous country itself, is very well aware of the challenges that highlanders face. This is the reason why we are eager to share our experience and support economic initiatives driven by the

local communities," said Dr. Danielle Meuwly, Regional Director of the Swiss Cooperation Office for the South Caucasus. "Local people know best what is needed for mountainous regions and have thus to be part of the decision-making process."

"Systemic assistance to vulnerable and marginalized communities such as those living in the highlands, is at the heart of Austria's assistance to Georgia", said Alexander Karner, Head of the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC)'s local office in Tbilisi. "A substantial part of our support is dedicated to community and municipal initiatives, including sustainable mountain tourism and organic agriculture. We firmly believe that lasting development can only be achieved with the active engagement of citizens."

Georgia adopted a Law on the Development of High Mountainous Regions in 2015, paving the way for systemic policy efforts to address highland challenges. In 2019, with assistance from UNDP, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and ADC, the Government endorsed the country's first four-year Strategy on the Development of High Mountainous Settlements, committing new funding of USD 240 million for the period of 2019-2020 to promote economic development,

improve social welfare and expand access to people who live in Georgia's highest mountain regions.

Since 2016, nearly 1,800 settlements in Georgia have received high mountain status and many have benefitted from UNDP projects that aim to support local entrepreneurship, renewable energy, waste management and environmental tourism.

With support from Switzerland and Austria, UNDP provides funding for community and municipal initiatives focused on local economic development. So far, seven highland municipalities were awarded the total of USD 195,000, with over 65,000 highlanders benefiting from the projects. In addition, community and civil society organisations in nine mountainous municipalities received USD 266,000 for local development initiatives, benefitting over 4,000 highland residents.



**Georgia adopted a Law on the Development of High Mountainous Regions in 2015**

### Weather

Monday, December 14

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 7°C

Night Partly Cloudy

Low: 1°C

Tuesday, December 15

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 9°C

Night Cloudy

Low: 4°C

published by

**The Messenger**

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0108, Georgia  
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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.

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 3.2870; Euro - 3.9861; GBP - 4.3421; 100 Russian Ruble - 4.4906; Swiss Franc - 3.6987

## Georgia receives ₾ 1.5 billion from the EU



The EU Delegation published an interview with the EU Ambassador about assistance to Georgia

BY NIKA GAMTSEMLIDZE

According to the EU Ambassador to Georgia Carl Hartzell, in the event of a pandemic, Georgia received ₾ 1.5 billion in assistance directly from the EU and European financial institutions. According to Hartzell, 2/3 of this amount is a direct grant for Georgia, and half a billion GEL is a soft loan.

According to the EU Ambassador, the sum will be spent on the fight against the virus and mitigating the effects of the economic crisis caused by COVID-19.

“The European Union and Team Europe were able to mobilize about 1.5 billion GEL to help Georgia fight the COVID-19 pandemic. Almost 2/3 of this amount is presented as a grant, and the rest - as a soft loan,” said Hartzell.

The EU Delegation published an interview with the EU Ambassador about assistance to Georgia. Carl Hartzell notes that the assistance provided by the European Union in the fight against the pandemic in Georgia is not limited to finances and the country has also received medical equipment.

“I can proudly say that this is one of the highest rates of EU assistance to any foreign country in the world, which reflects the EU’s strong solidarity with Georgia in the current crisis,” the EU Ambassador added.

According to Hartzell, in addition to the ₾ 1.5 billion in financial assistance received from the EU in the event of a pandemic, Georgia also received medical and personal protection equipment.

The ambassador has also noted that Georgia has already received more than 2 million units of personal protective equipment, as well as medical equipment, including respira-

tors and other equipment. According to the ambassador, another aid package will arrive in Georgia before the end of this year.

“We try to help people directly on the front lines of the pandemic. Our assistance is distributed to 9 laboratories in Georgia, the Emergency Coordination and Emergency Care Center, as well as more than 4,000 ambulance crew drivers and doctors, to assist them in their duties. In addition, we provide training on safe working rules, stress management, and other similar issues, which is very important,” noted the ambassador.



Georgia has also received medical equipment from the EU to fight against the virus

## \$9 Billion ADB Facility to Help Members Access and Distribute COVID-19 Vaccines

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has launched a \$9 billion vaccine initiative—the Asia Pacific Vaccine Access Facility (APVAX)—offering rapid and equitable support to its developing members as they procure and deliver effective and safe coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccines.

“As ADB’s developing members prepare to vaccinate their people as soon as possible, they need financing to procure vaccines as well as appropriate plans and knowledge to be able to safely, equitably, and efficiently manage the vaccination process,” said ADB President Masatsugu Asakawa. “APVAX will play a critical role in helping our developing members meet these challenges, overcome the pandemic, and focus on economic recovery.”

More than 14.3 million positive cases have been identified in Asia and the Pacific, causing more than 200,000 deaths. As the pandemic persists, economic growth in developing Asia is projected to contract by 0.4% in 2020—the first regional gross domestic product contraction since the early 1960s.

Promoting safe, equitable, and effective access to vaccines is a top priority for ADB’s



**ADB has launched a \$9 billion vaccine initiative**

COVID-19 response efforts. Vaccination programs can break the chain of virus transmission, save lives, and mitigate the negative economic impacts of the pandemic by restoring confidence in people’s ability to work, travel, and socialize safely.

The APVAX provides a comprehensive framework and resource envelope for supporting developing Asia’s vaccine access, using two complementary components. The Rapid Response Component will provide timely support for critical vaccine diagnostics, procurement of vaccines, and transporting vaccines from the place of purchase to ADB’s developing members.

The Project Investment Component will support investments

in systems for successful distribution, delivery, and administration of vaccines along with associated investments in building capacity, community outreach, and surveillance. This may include such areas as cold-chain storage and transportation, vehicles, distribution infrastructure, processing facilities, and other physical investments. The component may also be used to develop or expand vaccine manufacturing capacity in developing members.

ADB financing for vaccines will be provided in close coordination with other development partners including the World Bank Group, World Health Organization (WHO), COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access Facility (COVAX), GAVI, and bilateral and multilateral partners.

APVAX promotes safe and effective vaccines to be accessed in a fair manner. For a vaccine to be eligible for financing, it must meet one of three criteria. It must be procured via COVAX, prequalified by WHO, or authorized by a Stringent Regulatory Authority. Additional access criteria, such as a vaccination needs assessment, a vaccine allocation plan by the developing member, and a mechanism for effective coordination among de-



Promoting safe, equitable, and effective access to vaccines is a top priority for ADB’s COVID-19 response efforts

velopment partners also help ensure that vaccine support under APVAX can be fairly and effectively implemented.

ADB is also making available a \$500 million Vaccine Import Facility to support the efforts of its developing members to secure safe and effective vaccines, as well as the goods that support distribution and inoculation. The facility is part of ADB’s Trade and Supply Chain Finance Program. AAA-guarantees available through the program’s vaccine import facility will mitigate payment risks and facilitate import of these goods. This will employ the same eligibility criteria on vaccines as COVAX. Cofinancing with private sector partners could result in the Import Facility supporting \$1 billion in vaccine and related imports within a year.

In April, ADB approved a \$20 billion package to support its

developing members in addressing the impacts of the pandemic and streamlined some procedures to deliver quicker and more flexible assistance. ADB has committed \$14.9 billion in loans, grants, and technical assistance, including \$9.9 billion in quick-disbursing budget support from the COVID-19 Pandemic Response Option (CPRO) and support for the private sector.

In November, ADB announced \$20.3 million in additional technical assistance to establish systems to enable efficient and equitable distribution of vaccines across Asia and the Pacific.

ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. Established in 1966, it is owned by 68 members—49 from the region.