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International partners criticize GD's decision to withdraw from EU-initiated agreement



► US Embassy issued a statement saying that the US is deeply disturbed and exasperated by the decision

BY NIKA GAMTSEMLIDZE

Yesterday, the Georgian Dream chairman Irakli Kobakhidze announced at a press conference that the ruling party had decided to withdraw from the EU-mediated agreement of April 19. The decision of GD was followed by a massive backlash both in the country and on an international scale.

Leaders and representatives of Georgia's partners around the world showed concerns regarding the decision of the ruling party. Shortly after the announcement, seven American senators published a joint statement on GD's decision.

US Senators' wrote that they are discouraged by the recent developments in the country, adding they undermined the efforts that were agreed upon on April 19.

"At this pivotal time in Georgia's democratic development, it was all the more disappointing that Georgian Dream today announced its intention to unilaterally walk away from the April 19 agreement. It is largely incumbent upon the ruling party to set aside political differences and pursue an inclusive, multiparty parliamentary process that benefits all Georgians," reads the statements of US Senators.

The Chairman of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Jim Risch said that



► MEP Viola von Cramon visited Georgia after the decision of GD was announced
Intro: The agreement was reached with the help of the EU on April 19

the GD party does not take the interests of the country into consideration and only cares about its own future.

The US Embassy also issued a statement critically assessing the decision of the ruling party. The statement reads that the US is deeply disturbed and exasperated by the decision of the ruling party.

"While we continue to press for all parties to sign and fully implement the agreement,

Georgian Dream's unilateral withdrawal is another deviation from the letter and spirit of the negotiations Georgian Dream participated in and the agreement they signed. This decision by the ruling party only creates more political instability for the country."

The statement also reads that the decision raises questions about the commitment of the ruling party to achieving the

democratic goals of the country, which were set by the GD itself. It also indicates that Washington is alarmed about the repeated setbacks to Georgia's democratic future.

MEP Viola von Cramon also took to Twitter to express her feelings about the GD decision. She visited Georgia yesterday to meet with NGOs, the opposition, as well as GD representatives to discuss the ongoing events.

Von Cramon expressed that she is 'very disappointed over the decision made by the ruling party,' and says that both sides, UNM and GD, are playing a terrible political game

The ruling team's decision was followed by a massive outcry in Georgia as well. Some of the opposition MPs announced that they would be leaving the parliament. One of them is Nika Melia, who was recently named as the US Mayor candidate by part of the opposition.

According to Melia, the Georgian Dream withdrew from the agreement because it was afraid of the document, according to which, if the ruling party fails to get 43% of the vote in the upcoming self-government elections, new parliamentary elections should be held in 2022.

The decision of the Georgian Dream to withdraw from the agreement was announced on Thursday, July 28.

Perspectives of the Eastern Partnership Trio

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

On July 19, the Presidents of the EU Eastern Partnership Trio (Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia) signed the Batumi Summit Declaration, which can be considered as a new stage of the partnership.

The declaration envisages deepening cooperation between the signatory countries to achieve a common goal - to join the European Union.

The President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky, the President of Moldova Maria Sandu, and the President of Georgia Salome Zurbashvili signed a declaration on the territory of the Roman Empire near Petra near Batumi, which is now a museum.

The Eastern Partnership trio summit almost failed. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky would have refused to visit Batumi unless the Georgian authorities released two Ukrainian nationals arrested in November 2020.

Their boat was detained in Georgian territorial waters because Mikheil Baturin, a former member of Saakashvili's bodyguard, was on board and someone provided false information to the Georgian authorities - Mikheil Saakashvili was trying to enter Georgia by boat.

Although Saakashvili could not be found, all three people on the boat were arrested and sentenced to four years in prison on July 14, 2021, a few days before the Batumi summit. If Zelenski had not arrived, Moldovan President Maria Sandu would have refused to come.

The disruption of the summit by the Georgian authorities would be a very bad surprise for Charles Michel, who was in Azerbaijan and Armenia before arriving in Georgia and said that the EU intends to become more involved in the affairs of the Caucasus.

The disruption of the summit was considered dangerous by the already criticized Georgian authorities, and Salome Zurbashvili pardoned all three people detained on the boat on July 17.

They were released on July 19. Zelenski is said to have flown in only after learning of the release of the detainees. The

history of the Eastern Partnership begins in 2009. The EU then offered a partnership between the EU and the Russian Federation to the six post-Soviet countries. This rather large area can be called New Eastern Europe.

The rapprochement of these countries with the EU has been fiercely opposed by official Moscow. For various reasons, three countries have left the partnership - Belarus and Azerbaijan have problems with the democratic reforms demanded by the European Union, and today Armenia still considers Russia to be the main guarantor of security. Without Russian peacekeepers, Armenians will no longer be able to control the part of Karabakh that has not been occupied by Azerbaijan since the 2020 war.

Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia are the three countries that have signed the partnership

agreement and have announced an ambitious goal - to join the European Union. The Eastern Partnership Summit is scheduled for December 2021. According to President Zelenski, the summit should set out a 'specific geopolitical vision' for the EU, ie some new offer from the EU. As if in response to this statement, Charles Michel named the need for reforms, to which special attention should be paid by Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova for EU integration.

"Partner countries must live up to their commitments to implement reforms," said Charles Michel.

Today, it seems that Georgia is in a more difficult situation than Ukraine and Moldova, in the conditions of a protracted political crisis. The closest action plan for the reforms to be implemented in the case of Georgia is given in the April 19

agreement reached through the mediation of the same Charles Michel.

The implementation of the agreement has already been seriously criticized by Western friends. Particularly frustrating was the continuation of the practice of appointing judges before the start of judicial reform.

If we recall the events of July 5-6, the opposition to the LGBT community, and the brutal crackdown on journalists, the opposition expected Charles Michel to be particularly tough on the Georgian Dream and, to a lesser extent, dissatisfied with Michel, in their relatively mild tone. This attitude was most clearly expressed by Giga Bokeria, who stated that "Michelle's vocabulary did not reflect the dramatic situation in the country."

However, Charles Michel clearly and unequivocally stated

the position of the EU - the agreement of April 19 must be implemented, otherwise, Georgia will be subject to sanctions and at least will not receive macro-financial assistance from the EU.

It seems that the European Union is going to hold local self-government elections for the Georgian Dream. Prime Minister Gharibashvili said that the elections will be held in a highly democratic manner.

At the same time, it announces a convincing victory in this election. The opposition's expectations are quite different - according to the April 19 agreement, if the Georgian Dream fails to win 43% of the proportional part of the self-government elections, early parliamentary elections will be held in 2022. Georgia is facing a difficult political autumn, with many expected or unexpected political complications.

THE NEWS IN BRIEF

PREPARED BY THE MESSENGER STAFF



Khoshtaria: Boycott would be surrender, we have to fight

"What the Georgian Dream told us yesterday was an open statement on their pro-Russian course and on the Georgian government's anti-Western sentiments. They said that the agreement with the European Union means nothing to them. This is a challenge for all citizens of Georgia," stated Sakrebulo Chairman candidate Elene Khoshtaria regarding the Georgian Dream's refusal to follow the Charles Michelle agreement.

"Nika Melia and I, all the parties that are united in this coalition, are absolutely principled in this struggle, to make a choice in favor of a coalition, diverse government. We do not even discuss, we are not going to be on the agenda of the Georgian Dream. No boycott, boycott would be surrender, we have to fight," Khoshtaria added.

Nika Melia is leaving Parliament

Nika Melia, the chairman of the United National Movement, Tbilisi mayoral candidate, is leaving the mandate of a member of parliament.

As Melia noted, he intends to concentrate entirely on self-government elections together with Tbilisi Sakrebulo candidate Elene Khoshtaria.

Yesterday, July 28, Georgian Dream annulled the Charles Michel agreement. The ruling party rejects the obligation to hold snap elections if less than 43% are taken, noting that elections may be called in 53% of cases, although this will depend on the ruling team's 'good will' and a number of other denominators.



FRIDAY		JULY 30	
Day		A few clouds	High: 29°C
Night		Clear skies	Low: 19°C
SATURDAY		JULY 31	
Day		Sunshine	High: 31°C
Night		A few clouds	Low: 20°C

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US launches 5-year program to ensure Georgia's energy independence and security

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has launched a new five-year “Georgia’s Energy Future Program” aimed at strengthening Georgia’s energy security on July 29. The official opening ceremony of the program, which is based on the Gori wind power plant, was attended by the US Ambassador to Georgia Kelly Degnan, and the Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia Natia Turnava, Chairman of Parliamentary Committee of Sector Economy, David Songulashvili and other officials.

The project will be implemented by Deloitte Consulting Ltd. with the funding of USAID. According to the Ministry of Economy of Georgia, the project budget is \$15.7 million. Its main goal is to improve Georgia’s energy security through the implementation of reforms and sustainable development of the energy sector, which will help the country to fulfill its obligations under the Association Agreement with the European Union. The purpose of the program is to ensure achieving stable and reliable electricity generation, to increase resilience to external adverse impacts, including resistance against cyberattacks, and to assist the reforms that will accelerate Georgia’s euro-atlantic integration.

“The US government has traditionally helped us with energy reform and the development of Georgian energy...The main task of our reforms, our energy policy, is to make Georgia’s energy sector fully independent, strong, self-reliant, and less dependent on imports, with the help of our American friends,” Turnava said.

According to the Minister, it is necessary for Georgia to develop its own renewable energy sources - these are hydropower plants, wind, and solar stations, and other new renewable energy technologies that are entering the country. She clarified that Georgia needs to have trade with neighboring countries and was informed of the plan to lay a power cable on the Black Sea floor to connect to the European energy market, but the country needs to have its own resources and be strong in this regard in the first place.

Turnava stated that the energy security that Georgia is working on with American partners includes various components, such as the development of new stations based on local energy sources, cybersecurity, and the proper quality of electricity, supplies without interruptions.

Through the implementation



► The official opening ceremony of the USAID Energy Future Support Program was held on the territory of the wind farm in Gori.



► Turnava discussed the opportunities for investing in Georgia's energy with the representatives of Japan's large corporation Toyota Tsusho.

of the program, Georgia will be able to attract private investments that will be beneficial for upgrading the energy infrastructure and creating new power generation in the future, which will be specially designed

for climate-adapted resources. Regarding the Energy matters, Turnava also met with a delegation from the Japanese Toyota Tsusho Corporation. The meeting was also attended by the Deputy Ministers and Am-

bassador of Japan to Georgia. At the meeting, the Minister briefed the Japanese guests on the current economic trends in Georgia and the investment and business environment. According to her, there are a number

of agreements between Georgia and Japan aimed at further development of bilateral economic ties. At the meeting, the representatives of Toyota Tsusho expressed special interest in the energy of Georgia, including the so-called Production of green hydrogen. According to the statement, Georgia's potential in this regard was emphasized.

As informed by the ministry, the corporation, which is part of the Toyota Group, operates in 120 countries and has more than 66,000 employees. Toyota Group is already represented in the Georgian market, but there's a bigger possibility for the company to be represented in our market as an investor. According to the minister, works are underway for the development of this innovative direction and she thinks that it's possible to implement a pilot program as well.

According to the Ambassador of Japan to Georgia Imamura Akira, Toyota Tsusho is one of the largest trading companies in Japan and operates in areas such as trade, investment, factory construction, energy development, finance, logistics, and more. The company is interested in investing in Georgia, as the country has the potential to be a partner in future business relations, especially in the field of renewable energy. The Japanese diplomat focused on the recently signed agreement on mutual protection of investments between the two countries.