

US congressional delegation arrives in Georgia, visits occupation line, meets with Georgian PM

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

Five US Congressmen, Alex Mooney, Kelly Michael Armstrong, Bryan George Steil, Carol Devine Miller, and Ronald Jean Estes arrived in Georgia yesterday. The congressmen are hosted by the Prime Minister of Georgia and during their stay in Georgia between September 6-9 they will meet with Georgian officials including, Foreign Minister David Zalkaliani, Defence Minister Juansher Burchuladze, Minister of Economy Natia Turnava, and Georgian MPs.

Congressman Mooney stated yesterday that Georgia is advancing in terms of forming a democratic form of government.

According to Congressman Carol Miller, Georgia is a long-time partner of the US, and "The United States needs to show its support for another democracy in this part of the world".

"It is great to have a country like Georgia that partners with the United States on so many things, including fighting against terrorism or aspirations of being with NATO and then also concerns with Russia and the activities that they are doing that particularly affect the country," said congressman Steil.

Yesterday, the US legislators visited Odzisi, a village located near the administrative boundary dividing the Russian-occupied Tskhinvali (South Ossetia) region from the rest of Georgia. Alexi Batiashvili, First Deputy Head of the State Security Service briefed the congressmen on the situation on the ground, focusing on the so-called borderization process, facts of ethnic discrimination of Georgians, and the illegal detentions of the local population.



"We are just very excited to have a good friend in this region," stated congressman Alex Mooney after meeting with Georgian PM.

According to congressman Alex Mooney, the world needs to see the situation at the occupation line and it is important to show Russia that international partners are 'deeply concerned about the aggression that is taking place'.

"The US strongly supports Georgia's sovereignty and their right to be in their country and we are very proud to be friends with Georgia and their government and their democracy," said Con-

gresswoman Carol Miller.

US Congressmen met with the PM Garibashvili at the Government Administration, where they discussed the strategic partnership between the United States and Georgia. Readiness was expressed at the meeting towards continuing the close cooperation both at the executive and legislative levels.

According to the Press Service of the Government Administration, US support

in the institutional building of Georgia, the increased capability of defense, implementation of democratic reforms has been highlighted at the meeting. The discussion also touched upon the upcoming local elections and the PM stressed that 'Georgia is ready to hold them in a free, fair and transparent manner and that the Government of Georgia welcomes the active engagement of international observers in the election process.'

The focus was also made on the important role of Georgia in international security

and peace operations. Georgia's support in the emergency evacuation of people from Kabul was especially stressed.

The parties also discussed the economic relationship and as the Georgian side stressed, 'further strengthening trade and economic relations with the United States is the top priority of the Government of Georgia'.

As Congressman Mooney stated after the meeting, the US is 'very excited to have a good friend in this region'. "We are worried about the aggression coming from Russia. We continue to work with Georgia to ensure that the situation here is safe and secure," he stated.



It was pointed out at the meeting that Georgia remains to be a reliable partner of the USA in the Black Sea region.

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NDI Launches International Limited Long-Term Election Assessment Mission of Georgia's 2021 Municipal Elections



TBILISI – The National Democratic Institute (NDI) announced today the launch of its international limited long-term election assessment mission for the 2021 municipal elections in Georgia. The effort builds on NDI's series of high-level meetings that aim to demonstrate support for Georgia's democratic development and European and Euro-Atlantic integration and reinforce the international community's expectation for adherence by all parties to the principles of genuine democratic elections and political processes.

NDI's limited long-term election assessment team includes three long-term analysts (LTAs) and a mission director, supported by additional Georgia-based assistants. The team is focused on a select number of key electoral themes, including: the conduct of political campaigns, the administration of elections, Georgia's media and information space, gender and inclusion issues, as well as the impact of Covid-19 on the elections. NDI will use data gathered from the assessment team to inform recommendations as it continues its engagement in the coming

months to strengthen Georgia's electoral process.

The assessment team arrived in Tbilisi on September 4 and 5, and will remain in Georgia through election day. They will respect social distancing and additional covid-19 protocols throughout the duration of their stay in Georgia. NDI's international limited long-term election assessment mission will conduct its activities in a nonpartisan, professional manner, in accordance with Georgian law and the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation.

Georgian and Ossetian youth to tell a story of life after conflict

The EU and UNDP help create virtual space for dialogue across conflict divides

TBILISI. 6 September 2021 – Young people from across the conflict divide with the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia worked jointly to create over 100 posters, blogs, graphic comics, quizzes, videos and animations that reflect life in their communities. The artwork and stories are presented on the House of Peace web platform (available in Georgian, Ossetian and Russian), developed by the non-governmental 'Coalition for IDPs' Rights' with support from the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

On 3 September, in the city of Gori, the public launch of the House of Peace project brought together residents from the Shida Kartli region and people displaced by conflict. The event will be followed



European Union

COBERM
A Joint EU-UNDP Initiative



by a social media campaign to promote the House of Peace platform on Facebook and Instagram.

"The European Union is supporting grassroots initiatives and civil society-driven projects that have a potential to prevent conflicts and build peace," said **Toivo Klaar**, European Union Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia. "We encourage civil society organizations to explore new areas of peace- and confidence-building and help strengthen ties between communities divided by conflict."

"House of Peace tells a story

of life after conflict through an impressive collection of social art and written pieces created by youth," noted UNDP Acting Head **Anna Chernyshova**. "It is important that this innovative peacebuilding initiative continues to grow, reaching out to more people, enhancing communication between divided communities and contributing to confidence-building efforts in the region."

The House of Peace website informs visitors about the everyday life, aspirations, thoughts and hopes of youth living on both sides of the administrative boundary line. It also includes information about the COVID-19 virus and

practical recommendations on how to stay safe amid the pandemic.

On the website, a helpful, automated chatbot named Nelly answers users questions and guides them through the website content. The chatbot is named in honour of Nelly Gabaraeva, a remarkable Ossetian photographer and artist who dedicated her life to creating a photographic portrait of Tskhinvali; she is warmly remembered in the region as the 'people's photographer'.

Youth that were involved in developing the website worked in teams to create its graphic and written content. Experts

from Georgia and Germany delivered a series of online training in arts, photography and writing to project participants.

The EU and UNDP support to the House of Peace project draws on the Confidence Building Early Response Mechanism (COBERM) programme, designed to engage a wide range of civil society actors in building confidence among communities divided by conflict. Some 200 civil society initiatives have been implemented since the start of the programme in 2010, contributing to developing new approaches to peace- and confidence-building.

Weather

Tuesday, September 7

Day Cloudy
High: 27°C
Night Showers
Low: 18°C

Wednesday, September 8

Day Rain
High: 20°C
Night Cloudy
Low: 18°C

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Government approves State Support Program for increasing Georgian wine's export potential



The goal of the new state funding project is to promote and increase Georgian wine sales in new geographies.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

On Monday, the Government of Georgia approved the State Support Program for Promoting Georgian wine abroad. The program aims at enhancing Georgian wine's export potential, competitiveness, and popularity in international markets. The program will be implemented by

the National Wine Agency and will cost ₾ 3 million.

According to the Minister of Agriculture Levan Davitashvili, the project envisages the co-funding of trade marketing activities for wine companies. As he said, information about Georgian wine is constantly being shared with different target markets such as the USA, Great Britain,

Poland, the Baltics, South-East Asia, etc. However, as the minister notes, it is planned to make Georgian wine more popular on the international market. For this reason, support under the program will be provided for various marketing activities seeking to ensure entry into chain store networks, efforts designed to stimulate sales by franchises and special wine shops, media campaigns for enhancing sales, and advertising sales through online platforms and social networking.

"We have decided to provide the State Support Program in the markets where Georgian wine is already presented but not at the desired scale. In other words, Georgia should establish itself among the renowned wine producers and exporters in the world," said Davitashvili.

According to the minister, the goal is to promote and increase wine sales in new geographies, therefore, the government will co-finance marketing campaigns of wine companies in every ex-



The marketing budget for each wine company per year is set at ₾ 600,000, however, if the program is implemented successfully, the state might allocate additional funds.

port market where Georgian wine is presented (except for CIS countries). The marketing budget for each company per year was set at ₾ 600,000, however, this is a pilot version and if the program is implemented successfully, the state might increase the program budget.

According to Davitashvili, the Georgian government has been

carrying out wine promotion programs for years. Funding for Georgian wine has increased significantly since 2013, and today, the Georgian wine promotion budget has become ₾ 9-10 million. He also noted that 341 companies exported wine to 53 countries in 2019, while in 2020 about 371 companies exported wine to 60 countries.

2nd quarter of 2021: Business turnover increased by 56.7%

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat) has released a report for the second quarter of 2021, according to which, the turnover of the business sector in the mentioned period increased by 56.7% compared to the same period last year and amounted to ₾ 35 billion.

According to Geostat, the output of the business sector is also characterized by an upward trend. In the second quarter of 2021, its volume was estimated at ₾ 13.2 billion, which is 43.4% more than in the same period last year.

At the same time, 61.4% of total turnover falls on large businesses, 18.2% - on medium, and 20.4% - on small businesses. The situation is slightly different in the case of total output - large businesses account for 45.9% of output, medium-sized - 27.1%, and small businesses - 27%. Total purchases of goods and services by enterprises in the second quarter of 2021 amounted to ₾ 19.2 billion, which is 48.5% more than in the same period last year, and purchases of goods and services for resale - ₾ 11.8 billion, which is 52% more than in the same period last year.

Also, in the second quarter of this year, the highest share in the turnover structure of the business sector - 36.8% comes from the trade sector. Art, entertainment and leisure are in second place with 31.6%, followed by manufacturing with 10.2%, construction with 5.7%, transport and storage with 4.7%,



According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, the food price index has risen at the expense of wheat, sugar, and palm oil.

electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning with 2.8%. 8.2 percent is distributed to other sectors. During the reporting period, the manufacturing industry accounted for 25.1% and trade for 19.2%, followed by construction with 16.2% and transport and warehousing with 9%.

In the total turnover by regions, Tbilisi leads with 77.5%, followed by Adjara AR - 5.3%, Kvemo Kartli - 4.8%, Imereti - 4.1% and Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti - 2.3%.

The Geostat report also reads that the average number of employees in the second quarter of 2021 was 659.7 thousand people, which is 4.4% more than in the same period last year. 42% of the total number of employees are women, and 58% - men.

According to Geostat, 40.6% of the total number of employ-

ees are large businesses, 22.6% - medium-sized, and the remaining 36.8% - small businesses. The total number of employees was 623.7 thousand people (4% more than in the same period last year).

Total expenditures of enter-

prises on staff - ₾ 2 648.3 million, is 22.9% more than in the same period last year. At the same time, in the second quarter of the current year, the average monthly salary in the business sector amounted to ₾ 1 389.6, which is an increase of ₾

214 compared to the same period last year. Among them, women's salaries amounted to ₾ 1,098.4, which is ₾ 182.1 more than in the same period last year.

According to the size of enterprises, the average monthly salary is as follows: Large business - ₾ 1 440.3; Medium business - ₾ 1 640.4; Small business - ₾ 1 144.9. At the same time, the sectors of trade, manufacturing and healthcare, and social services are leading in the business sector in terms of the number of employees during the reporting period. A significant share in the structure also falls on the enterprises in the field of construction, transport, and warehousing, and accommodation and food supply activities.

As for the number of employees, this indicator is distributed as follows: Tbilisi - 65.7%, Adjara AR - 8.4%, Imereti - 6.7%, Kvemo Kartli - 5.7%, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti - 3.6%.

According to Geostat, in August 2021, compared to the previous month, the inflation rate in Georgia was 0.7%, and the annual inflation rate was 12.8%. The same indicator was 9.9% in June, up from 11.9% in July.

As for core inflation, this figure was 6.7% in August 2021 compared to the same period last year, and the annual core inflation rate without tobacco was set at 6.8%.

The main impact on the formation of the monthly inflation rate was the change in prices for food and non-alcoholic beverages, which increased by 16.2%, which was reflected in annual inflation by 5.09% points.



According to Geostat, in August, annual inflation in Georgia amounted to 12.8%.