

## Negotiations between Russia and US underway in Geneva

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

As part of a bilateral Strategic Stability Forum, the US and Russian delegations are in Geneva for talks, one of the main topics of which is to discuss Russia's demands for security guarantees in December.

Earlier, the heads of the US and Russian delegations, Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, and Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov held a preliminary meeting in Geneva on January 10 in the format of a business dinner.

After 7 hours of talks with her Russian counterpart, Sherman told the media "We will not allow anyone to close NATO's open-door policy."

According to the US Deputy Secretary of State, during the talks in Geneva, she discussed with the Russian representative the bilateral steps towards de-escalation concerning missile systems and military exercises. At the same time, she once again warned Russia that invading Ukraine would cost him dearly and once again called on Russia to withdraw its troops from the Ukrainian border.

"We have presented a series of ideas where our two countries can engage in interactions that will be in our security interests and improve strategic stability."

The Deputy Secretary said she offered the Russian side to continue talks on the deployment of missile systems. At the same time, she ruled out giving Russia any guarantees on Ukraine's non-membership in NATO.

On the other hand, Ryabov announced: "We want to know at the Madrid Summit that Georgia and Ukraine will never become members of NATO. We emphasize the need for Russia to ensure that Ukraine never becomes a member of NATO," he said, adding that the Declaration of Bucharest Summit 2008, where it says that Georgia and Ukraine will become NATO members should be changed and say that it will never happen. The Deputy Minister said that Rus-



"We will not allow anyone to close NATO's open-door policy," Sherman said.

sia needs firm and legal guarantees, not promises.

US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken said on Sunday that he did not expect any breakthroughs from the Geneva talks or during the NATO-Russia Council in Brussels. In an interview with ABC on January 9, Blinken said he had no particular hope of achieving the US-Russian delegation meeting at the OSCE this weekend. "Today the issue is this: will President Putin choose the path of diplomacy and dialogue if he takes the path of confrontation," said Blinken.

He said that Russia has committed repeated acts of aggression against its neighbors going back more than a decade – Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine in 2014, and now the prospect of doing that again.

"And at the same time, this is even bigger than Ukraine. This goes to some

basic principles of international relations that are what guarantee peace and security: the principle that one nation can't simply change the borders of another by force; the principle that one nation can't dictate to another its choices and with whom it will associate; the principle that we can't have countries exerting spheres of influence to subjugate their neighbors. That should be a relic of the past. All of that is what is in play here. That's why it's so important that we stand not only for Ukraine's territorial integrity, its sovereignty, and its independence but for these basic principles."

The background to the US-Russia talks on strategic stability is the mobilization of Russian troops along Ukraine's borders and Moscow's demands to the US and NATO.

On December 17, 2021, the Russian

Foreign Ministry announced the draft agreements on security guarantees with the United States and NATO. One of Russia's demands is that the US and NATO not allow further strengthening of NATO in the East and the admission of the former Soviet republics into the alliance. Also, refrain from any military activity in Ukraine, other Eastern European countries, the Caucasus, and Central Asia.

It's important that earlier this week, the US Secretary of State was asked about Russia's recently increased demands of guarantees on NATO's eastward non-expansion and his expectations from the upcoming US-Russia security talks scheduled for January 10.

According to Blinken, the source of instability in the region is Russia, not NATO: invading neighboring countries, interfering in other countries' elections, violating international arms control agreements, pulling back from long agreed confidence-building and transparency measures.

"Yes, Russia has raised issues of European security in its public statements and the documents that it put forward. But let's be very, very clear about this: NATO did not invade Ukraine; NATO did not invade Georgia; NATO did not position forces in Moldova against the will of its people. Those are all things, among many others, that Russia has done in recent years," Secretary said.

According to him over the past two decades, it is Russia that has invaded neighboring countries; interfered in other countries' elections; used chemical weapons to attempt to assassinate opponents of the government, and done so on foreign soil; violated international arms control agreements; pulled back from confidence-building and transparency measures long agreed.

"And so we and our allies will be raising these and other issues with Russia in the days and weeks ahead," U.S. Secretary of State announced a few days before Geneva talks.



"We condemn Russia's military buildup on Ukraine's borders, as well as Moscow's increasingly harsh rhetoric, as it continues to push the false narrative that Ukraine seeks to provoke a conflict with Russia."

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 3.0900; Euro - 3.5000; GBP - 4.1984; 100 Russian Ruble - 4.1180; Swiss Franc - 3.3532

# IDPs Holding a Rally on Temka, Saying the Building Is Collapsing and They Will Spend the Night in the Street

By THE MESSENGER STAFF

IDPs are holding a rally on Temka and asking the government to provide them with apartments. They have no plans to return home and say they will

spend the night on the street. Locals said their apartment building was already damaged, and today the building began to collapse. Citizens point out that the walls and ceiling are damaged,

and new cracks appear in the building every day and fall into the plaster. "Questions have been asked and we are waiting for answers until we get concrete answers. We are not leaving here and we

will not leave," said one of the protesters. They say that the relevant agencies are aware of the problem, but have not responded and are limited to promises. A representative of the Min-

istry of Health arrived on the spot and offered to rent them out temporarily, but the locals refused and noted that this was another promise from the government.

# State Economy Reaches Double-Digit Economic Growth, PM Garibashvili Says



According to the Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Garibashvili, economic recovery has enabled the Government to substantially improve the key fiscal parameters.

expectations of 2021 were not promising.

As a result of the high economic growth, nominal indicators of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) have increased to 59.6 BLN GEL, compared to the originally forecasted 53.4 BLN GEL.

The PM notes that fast economic recovery enabled the government to 'substantially improve the key fiscal parameters'.

In particular, the government's debt was reduced to 50% instead of the planned 60.1% of the GDP.

The PM also announced yesterday that the decision regarding pharmaceutical prices would be made this week. According to him, it is

expected that this step will reduce the prices significantly. The government plans to open up to the Turkish market and receive high-quality medications, which will reduce the cost of medicines and develop a bill to further improve the situation in this regard.

Garibashvili also focused on the country's social policy, noting that work is underway on a project focusing on the creation of social jobs.

"We must change the current social policy, create new jobs, and reduce poverty, and that should be our main concern this year," Garibashvili noted, claiming that tens of thousands of jobs will be created within this project.



The overall annual growth rate of 2021, which is expected to be 10.7%, is 2.5 times higher compared to the original forecast.

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Garibashvili announced at the Executive Government Meeting yesterday that the country reached double-digit economic growth in 2021.

According to the PM, due to the economic recovery, the Government was enabled to substantially improve the key

fiscal parameters. As Garibashvili noted, 2021 started on a difficult note, and the economic shortfall reached 11.5% in January, however, the situation changed radically from March-April and according to the preliminary data for the first 11 months of the year, economic growth in 2021 reached 10.7%. The overall annual growth rate, which is expected to be 10.7%, is 2.5 times higher compared to the original forecast.

The PM stressed that the State Budget for 2021 was planned at the end of 2020 during the difficult epidemiological and economic situation, thus, economic recovery

## Weather

Tuesday, January 11

Day Clear  
High: 13°C  
Night Partly Cloudy  
Low: 2°C

Wednesday, January 12

Day Partly Cloudy  
High: 14°C  
Night Cloudy  
Low: 6°C

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