

# The Messenger

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## Ruling Party Head Pledges the Security of Georgian Citizens in Ukraine to be Ensured.



Kobakhidze stresses that Georgia aims to contribute to the prevention of the war, which, according to him, "is not easy."

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

**R**uling Georgian Dream (GD) party head Irakli Kobakhidze has expressed his concern over the latest developments in Ukraine, noting that 'risks of escalation are quite high'. Kobakhidze said that Georgia would like to contribute to the prevention of war in Ukraine, which, as he noted, "is not easy."

According to him, they are looking closely at the developments in Ukraine and their reaction, be it a visit or a statement, will be based on the situation. "We have expressed a very loud position in the resolution regarding the current events in Ukraine" he noted, referring to the resolution in support of Ukraine approved by the Georgian Parliament on February 1.

As for the Georgian citizens in Ukraine, Kobakhidze claimed that the government would do its best to ensure their safety when needed. On Saturday, the Georgian

Foreign Ministry announced that a hotline had been activated for Georgian citizens in Ukraine, noting that Georgian diplomatic representations are in constant communication with Georgian citizens. According to the Ministry, due to the high risk of escalation of tension and probability of invasion, Georgian Embassy in Kyiv and Consulates in Odessa and Donetsk are transformed onto an emergency working regime.

The US and EU member states are urging their citizens to leave the territory of Ukraine. As BBC reports, the US has warned that Russia has the troops in place to invade Ukraine 'at any time', urging its citizens to leave the country. White House said on Friday that an invasion could start with aerial bombing that would make departures difficult and endanger civilians. The UK, Canada, the Netherlands, Latvia, Japan, and South Korea have also urged their nationals to evacuate from Ukraine.



EU Member states and the US have called on their citizens to leave Ukraine.

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.9506; Euro - 3.3622; GBP - 4.0028; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.9339; Swiss Franc - 3.1833

# Kobakhidze: I'm not Planning to Visit Ukraine

By THE MESSENGER STAFF

Irakli Kobakhidze, like his teammate Mamuka Mdinardze, says that he is not going to visit Ukraine.

He said that he took a strong position on the current events in Ukraine by adopting a resolu-

tion.

"I am not planning to visit Ukraine. We are watching the events and depending on how things turn out, we will make a concrete decision. We will decide on any step, whether it is a visit or a statement. We have expressed a very loud position on

the events in Ukraine," said Irakli Kobakhidze.

The Georgian parliament passed a resolution in support of Ukraine on February 1 without even mentioning Russia.

The Georgian Dream and the opposition worked in parliament for two days to draft a resolution

in support of Ukraine, but could not agree on the text of the statement.

The joint drafting of a political act in support of Ukraine was demanded by the parliamentary opposition, but the ruling team did not take their remarks into account.

Nowhere in the final version of the text is Russia and its aggression mentioned, which was one of the main demands of the opposition. The wording of the text about Russia and NATO, as well as the title of the text, were disputed.

# Droa: Against the Backdrop of Western Support for Ukraine, Georgia Has a Chance to Move Closer to NATO

By THE MESSENGER STAFF

Political party Droa announces its vision for relations between Georgia and NATO, according to which, against the backdrop of the West's confident rhetoric and support for Ukraine, a unique opportunity is given to bring the North Atlantic Alliance even closer.

According to Droa, Georgia's unique geopolitical opportunity is hampered by the government's lack of unwavering political will for Euro-Atlantic integration.

"In the ongoing negotiations between Russia and the West on security issues in Eastern Europe, NATO categorically rejected Russia's request, the alliance was officially refused membership in Georgia and Ukraine.

NATO membership has been supported by the vast majority of the Georgian population for at

least 20 years. This is confirmed by the active participation of the Georgian Armed Forces in the Alliance's military missions. NATO is the most effective guarantee of the national defense of European democracies, and peace and democratic accountability of the government are the only way to ensure long-term economic attractiveness and public welfare for Georgia.

In addition, NATO membership is an important component of the country's universal recognition of its European identity.

"Droa, together with civil society representatives and other pro-Western opposition parties committed to the idea of democracy, will work hard to express the will of the Georgian people to our Western partners and to bring Georgia to the attention of the NATO Summit in Madrid on June 29-30, 2022," reads the statement.



# Cramon Says Georgia is Still Heading in the Opposite Direction of Democracy

By THE MESSENGER STAFF

MEP Viola von Cramon wrote on Twitter that she was worried that Georgia is moving in the opposite direction of democracy and its neighbors with authoritarian regimes.

Viola von Cramon responded to Georgia's position in a recently published Democrat Index report.

"It's sad to see that Georgia continues to move in the opposite direction of democracy. Moldova, Ukraine, and even Armenia have better rates.

"Georgia was once an exemplary example in the region, but now it continues to fall in the direction of its authoritarian neighbors: Russia, Azerbaijan, and Lukashenko Belarus," the

MEP wrote.

According to the Democracy Index, Georgia ranked 91st out of 167 countries in 2021 with 5.12 points. This score, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit of the Center for the Study of the Quality of Democracy, indicates a hybrid regime of democracy and authoritarianism in governing the country.

In an interview with VOA, Ben Hodges, the former head of the US military in the European region, said that the resolution in support of Ukraine passed by the Georgian parliament was a blank slate.

Hodges does not consider it worthwhile to express support for Ukraine without mentioning Russia. He spoke about other former Soviet countries, which, unlike Georgia, clearly state their attitude towards Russia.

Ben Hodges's interview with VOA spoke about the tense situation in Ukraine, the security of the Black Sea, and Georgia's role in the region.

# Converting Opportunities into Success

UNDP and the Bank of Georgia join hands to support women entrepreneurs and business leaders

Tbilisi, 11 February 2022 – The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Bank of Georgia signed today a Memorandum of Understanding to support the up-and-coming generation of women business leaders. This unprecedented partnership is expected to create game-changing opportunities for over 200 women-led startups and growing companies across the country.

The Women Entrepreneurs' School to be established under this collaboration offers proven business development models to help women identify their best prospects and build effective strategies to achieve their business goals. This unique approach, known as 360-Degree Business Development Support, creates a blueprint for new entrepreneurs, assisting them in four main areas – gaining theoretical knowledge, learning practical tools, accessing financial resources and building a strong cooperation network.

The Women Entrepreneurs' School draws on the resources made available by the Bank of Georgia, the Government of Sweden and UNDP's Rapid Financial Facility under the UN Joint Programme for Gender Equality.

Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, UNDP Assistant Administrator

and Director of the Regional Bureau for Europe and Central Asia, joined the event online from the UNDP headquarters in New York to inaugurate the agreement.

"Closing the gender gap has become a business imperative. While the problem is complex and the solutions are many, the most critical step is to help women realise that their future is too important to delegate it to someone else. UNDP welcomes our growing cooperation with the private sector that empowers women to determine their careers and their place in society," Spoljaric Egger said.

Nick Beresford, UNDP Resident Representative in Georgia, and Zurab Masurashvili, Bank of Georgia's Deputy CEO, attended the event in Tbilisi.

"The Bank of Georgia moves forward to support women in business. The Women Entrepreneurs' School draws on our partnership with UNDP and on the assessment of women's needs in entering business activities. Our joint work under this project will focus on four main directions that include education, support and coaching, practical experience and networking. We are convinced that this initiative will play an important role in empowering and supporting Georgian women entrepreneurs,"

Masurashvili said.

"At UNDP, we believe that the empowerment of women makes the economy more sustainable, people wealthier and gender equality stronger. The Women Entrepreneurs' School is expected to have a rising tide effect, inspire the establishment of successful business ventures and pave the path to greater social and economic prosperity," Beresford said.

Even though women-led enterprises are one of the fast-growing segments in Georgia, the business sector is still dominated by men. Only 29 percent of enterprises registered in 2019 were led by women, while the number of women-led businesses decreased slightly between 2017 and 2019. The National Statistics Office reports that 59.5 percent of Georgian women are outside the labour force. According to the World Bank, such a gender gap in the labour market costs Georgia around 11 percent of its Gross Domestic Product per capita. [Source: Women in Business, 2021. Economic Policy Research Centre]

Through their Women Entrepreneurs' School, UNDP and the Bank of Georgia are on a mission to address these complex issues, support women entrepreneurs in the early stages of their business ventures and partner with them in their life-changing work.

## Weather

Monday, February 14

Day Light Snow High: 4°C  
Night Snow Showers Low: 1°C

Tuesday, February 15

Day Cloudy High: 7°C  
Night Mostly Cloudy Low: 1°C

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