

Georgian Reconciliation Minister Meets Co-Chairs of Geneva Talks



► “Special attention was paid to the cases of kidnapping and illegal detention of Georgian citizens by the occupation forces,” said the State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, Tea Akhvlediani.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

The State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, Tea Akhvlediani, has met with the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Talks – Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for the South Caucasus Viorel Moşanu and UN Special Representative Jihan Sultanoglu. The Geneva International Discussions (GID) is a multilateral forum to address security and humanitarian consequences of the Russo-Georgian War of August 2008.

As the ministry reports, the sides discussed the difficult situation created as a result of Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine and the ongoing hostilities, its impact on global and regional security, and the challenges facing Georgia.

The meeting focused on the dire humanitarian and legal situation of people affected by the ongoing Russian occupation of two of Georgia’s regions. Special attention

was paid to intensifying joint efforts for the immediate and unconditional release of illegally detained Georgian citizens - Irakli Bebuia, Mamuka Chikvaidze, Kakhaber Natadze, Valeri Kaniashvili, Zaza Megrelishvili, and Tamaz Gogichashvili.

As the ministry’s statement reads, the discussion also highlighted the need to make progress on the topics on the agenda of the Geneva International Talks, including the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees and other humanitarian issues.

The sides also discussed the progress of the Ergneti Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism, which deals with incidents along the occupation line. The need for an unconditional resumption of the Gali (District in Abkhazia) was stressed as well.

The Geneva Co-Chairs reaffirmed their readiness to continue efforts for a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Georgia.



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EXCHANGE RATES: US DOLLAR - 3.3189 | EURO - 3.6607 | GBP - 4.3644 | 100 RUSSIAN RUBLE - 2.6045 | SWISS FRANC - 3.5791 |

Russia Wants Occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Regions 'Less Dependent' on Moscow's Aid

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The Russia-backed leaders of occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region, Bzhania and Anatoly Bibilov promptly welcomed Vladimir Putin's decision to recognize the independence of occupied Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk. Recall that, Tskhinvali Region had recognized the two entities even before Russia, back in 2014.

In return, on Thursday Russian-backed authority of occupied Luhansk recognized Abkhazia's independence from Georgia. Sokhumi set up 'diplomatic ties' with Ukraine's Kremlin-backed regions.

As Bzhania announced, Sokhumi also acknowledged the independence of Ukraine's Russian-occupied Donetsk and Luhansk "republics" on February 26 and took in evacuees from Donbas.

Amid the sanctions imposed on



Russia because of intervention and war in Ukraine, on March 9, Russian Deputy Economy Minister Dmitry Volvach met with Bzhania in Sokhumi, promising to maintain Russia's social and economic cooperation with the area at the meeting, yet during his visit Volvach hinted that occupied territories will soon be left without Russian Aid.

"Under current circumstances, the relationship between our governments takes on new significance and importance," Volvach said, referring to Russia's aggression in Ukraine and corresponding Western sanctions against Russia.

The Russian official thanked Bzhania for his efforts in the establishment of 'diplomatic contacts'

with seized Donetsk on March 9. Bzhania, on his part, promised to 'give the Russian people with every conceivable assistance'.

In the interview with Russian-owned news agency TASS Volvach said that Russia wants Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region to be less dependent on Moscow's finances and the goal is to reduce the dependence on Russian aid within the next three years.

"For example, the share of Russia's co-financing in terms of wage increases for public sector employees in the republics will gradually decrease – from 85% in 2022 to 15% by 2025."

Deputy Economy Minister claimed that as a result of Russian aid, share of regions' budgetary income increased in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali from 41.5% to 52%, and 7% to 18%, respectively, and now it's time for the occupied regions to attract investments and create investment-friendly environment through simplifying

regulations and improving investment climate, 'following Russian experience of guaranteeing the investors' rights'.

"The First stage of assistance, when we can simply give money there, develop infrastructure, has already ended," he said, adding 'we got everything that we could get from this stage in terms of economic growth'. Volvach also noted that Moscow would assist in preparation of legal frameworks and subsidize interest on loans for select agriculture, tourism and industrial projects.

The Deputy Minister also claimed that the GDP of Abkhazia, the region of less than quarter million people, stands at \$ 270 million, while Russia's 2021 aid amounts to over \$ 42.2 million.

Meanwhile, the GDP of Tskhinvali Region, with 50 000 inhabitants (unverified data), stands at \$ 51.6 million, while it receives Russian aid amounting to \$ 60.7 million.

Georgia's European Take

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

The war waged by Russia in Ukraine has accelerated and at the same time overshadowed an important event for Georgia — the application for membership in the European Union. It is clear to everyone that this statement will not bring results anytime soon, but it is important for Georgia's pro-Western forces in terms of maintaining the country's European perspective. This, first of all, implies the implementation of the reforms that the European Union demanded from Georgia.

In May 2021, the three Eastern Partnership countries (Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova), which have signed Association Agreements with the EU, signed a Memorandum of Understanding and agreed to work together to join the EU.

However, the EU did not recognize this 'trio' nor their prospect of joining the EU. Putin's attack on Ukraine in February this year has changed a lot.

Official Kiev demanded that the EU consider the issue of the country's accession to the EU in an expedited manner and sepa-

ately, and that the EU would, in principle, respond positively to the current situation.

Moldova and Georgia have applied for EU membership. However, the Georgian government fluctuated from the beginning. In response to the opposition's call that the Georgian government imitate Ukraine and demand that it join the European Union expeditiously, Irakli Kobakhidze, chairman of the Georgian Dream, said on March 1 that the government would not apply for EU membership until 2024.

He said that by this time Georgia would have fulfilled some obligations and his statement would have been 'more relevant'. According to him, the 'political gesture expressed' by the EU to Ukraine did not concern Georgia and Moldova.

However, the next day Irakli Kobakhidze changed his position diametrically and said at a briefing at his party's headquarters on March 2 that the ruling team had taken into account 'a common political context and a new reality' and decided to apply for EU membership. On March 3, the Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Gharibashvili, who was

alone, signed an application for membership in the European Union and addressed a 6-minute speech to the citizens of Georgia.

The pro-Western opposition unanimously supported the application for EU membership, considering it as a result of pressure from Georgian citizens on the government, and addressed its appeal on behalf of the Georgian people. "We do not have a decent government, but we are a decent fighting nation. Our government may not deserve your loyal attitude, but we, the Georgian people, deserve it.

Therefore, please accept this application from all over Europe. 'Georgia's place is in Europe,' said, for example, Nika Melia.

The official statement of the government and such appeals of the pro-Western opposition were followed by a document signed by the highest officials of the Georgian government since Zviad Gamsakhurdia's government in 1991:

Two Presidents (M. Saakashvili and G. Margvelashvili), 4 Speakers of Parliament (D. Usupashvili, D. Bakradze, N. Burjanadze, A. Asatiani), 5 former Prime Ministers, 8 Foreign

Ministers, other former officials and in Parliament 11 opposition parties represented.

On March 9, Mikheil Saakashvili, in custody, wrote an open letter to the European Commission and European leaders asking them to grant EU candidate status to Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova.

In the letter, Saakashvili also criticized the Georgian government, saying that "the Georgian government is very far from democratic standards," but that "people really have a European identity."

According to the opposition, the European statement of the government needs to be filled with real content and the Georgian Dream should return to the document of Charles Michel and carry out the reforms, the commitment of which was obliged by this document at the time. Without this, says Mamuka Khazaradze, the leader of 'Lelo', "no one will read Georgia's application."

It is already known that the European Commission will prepare a report and assess the extent to which Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova meet the fundamen-

tal values and requirements of the European Union. It can be said in advance that many critical remarks will be made about Georgia, which are not pleasant for the government.

The Georgian Dream understands this as well, and statements have already been made that the UNM is trying to hire lobbyists in the EU to prevent Georgia from gaining candidate status.

Charles Michel's 2021 document, which was a compromise between the government and the opposition, primarily provided for judicial reform, which included real steps towards the establishment of an independent judiciary, and electoral reform to give the opposition confidence in the electoral process.

The war waged by Putin in Ukraine has changed many things and raised even more claims against the Georgian Dream government both in the opposition and among Georgia's foreign friends. Putin's alleged defeat in Ukraine will make the Georgian government more attentive to the West, while the opposition still demands early parliamentary elections.

FRIDAY MARCH 11

Day Snow
High: 4°C

Night Snow
Low: 0°C

SATURDAY MARCH 12

Day Few clouds
High: 4°C

Night Partly cloudy
Low: -2°C

published by **The Messenger**

43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi,
0108, Georgia

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The Messenger welcomes your contributions. If you are interested in submitting an article or news item please contact.

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Dear Ukrainian friends,

Representatives of the Georgian film industry, unanimously condemn the Russian war against Ukraine!

In the given situation, to us Georgians, it is categorically unacceptable to stand on the sidelines and be inactive.

Today, Georgian people do their best to provide help to the Ukrainian citizens in various forms. Georgian people have always stood and will always stand by our Ukrainian friends. The pain of your families is the pain of our families, the doors of our homes are open for you - our fearless friends!

Your precious support during the course of our history is unforgettable, during the evil events in 2008 and even way before. Today, you are fighting the devil on behalf of the whole world. You are creating history through outstanding courage and fortitude; we know the victory is yours.

With this letter we would like to reach people who work in the film industry and beyond and affirm our solidarity and support, love and loyalty.

Dear Ukrainian colleagues who are in Georgia or plan to move to Georgia, we would like to offer you our collaboration: each of us is ready to involve you in our projects and offer you assistance in your field of work in our home country.

Your war is our war!

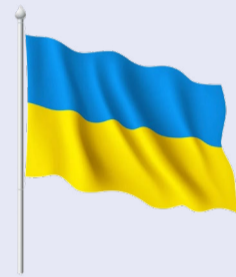
It is high time for the world to react!

Ukrainian people will win this war!

Glory to Ukraine! Glory to heroes!

Contact for support to the Ukrainian friends:

Geofilm4ukraine@gmail.com



Signed by:

1. Achi Kevlishvili - Location Manager
2. Aleksander Koridze - Director
3. Aleksander Lortkiphanidze - Actor, Scriptwriter
4. Aleksandre Machavariani - Studio Sarke, producer
5. Alexander Gabelaia - film critic, culture researcher
6. Amiran Dolidze - Director
7. Ana Barjadze - Director
8. Ana Chubiniidze - Pocket Studio - Director
9. Anna Khazaradze - 1991 Productions - Producer
10. Ana Kobakhidze - Actress
11. Ana Kvichidze - 17/07 - Director
12. Ana Sarukhanova - Director
13. Ana Urushadze - Director
14. Anano Bakuradze - Film critic, journalist
15. Anano Jachvliani - Production assistant
16. Anano Makharadze - Actress
17. Anastasia Tchanturia - Actress
18. Andro Chichinadze - Director
19. Anna Dziapshipa - Director, Producer
20. Avtandil Khorava - Director, Cinematographer
21. Bacho Makharadze - Production designer
22. Bacho Meburishvili - Enkeny Films, producer
23. Bakar Cherkezishvili - Director
24. Bebe Sesitashvili - Actor
25. Beka Turmanidze - Actor
26. Beso Kacharava - POSTRED, Sound Designer
27. Dati Tsintsadze - Zazafilms - Producer
28. David Chikadze - Director, Manager of Culture
29. David Chitaia - Director
30. David Davidiani - Film Critic
31. David Djanelidze - Director
32. David Gujabeidze - Cinematographer, Director
33. David Isakadze - Producer
34. David Ujmajuridze - Millimeter Film, director, producer
35. Davit Pirtskhalava - Playwright, director
36. Dea Cholikava - Director
37. Dea Kulumbegashvili - Director
38. Diana Maglakelidze - Film critic
39. Dito Tsintsadze - Director
40. Djaba Kldiashvili - Guffer
41. David Jashi - Betterfly Films, producer
42. Eka TsoTsoeia - Editor, Director
43. Ekaterine Khorguashvili - Production Manager
44. Elada Delianidi - actor
45. Eldar Shengelaia - Director
46. Elene Gabiliaia - Costume Department
47. Elene Margvelashvili - Parachute Films - Producer
48. Elene Mikaberidze - Scriptwriter, director
49. Elene Naveriani - Director
50. Elene Zvanbaia - Costume Department
51. George Varsimashvili - Scriptwriter, Director
52. Giga Agladze - Director
53. Giga Datiashvili - Actor
54. Giorgi Antidze - Director
55. Giorgi Getiashvili - Film critic
56. Giorgi Javakhishvili - film researcher
57. Giorgi Kobalia - Producer
58. Giorgi Mukhadze - Terra Incognita films, director, producer
59. Giorgi Ovashvili - Director
60. Giorgi Phridonishvili - Director, Cinematographer
61. Giorgi Suladze - Scriptwriter, Director
62. Giorgi Tsereteli - Actor
63. Giorgi Tsilosani - Director
64. Giorgi Zatiashvili - Director, Cinematographer
65. Girogi Kobalia - Director
66. Givi B. Odisharia - Scriptwriter, Director
67. Goga Kobalia - Director, Scriptwriter
68. Goga Tsikolia - Director
69. Grigol Jordania - Director, Actor
70. Guka Rcheulishvili - Producer
71. Guram Ghonghadze - Festival Programmer
72. Guri Odisharia - AC
73. Ika Avaliani - Production Designer
74. Ina Margvelashvili - Producer
75. Ina Nersesian - Cinematographer
76. Ioseb Soso Bliadze - Director
77. Irakli Kvirikadze - Actor
78. Irakli Metreveli - Cinematographer
79. Irakli Solomonashvili - Scriptwriter
80. Irina Gelashvili - Producer
81. Irine Jordania - Scriptwriter
82. Irine Rurua - Director
83. Juda (Khatia) Psuturi - Photographer
84. Kato Gelashvili - Costume Designer Merab Kokochashvili - Director
85. Kato Kalatozishvili - Actress
86. Keko Chelidze - Director
87. Ketevan Kipiani - Producer
88. Ketevan Nadibaidze - Production Designer
89. Ketevan Vashagashvili - Director
90. Ketis Isakadze - Production Manager
91. Keti Machavariani - Director
92. Keti Danelia - Producer
93. Khatia Maglakelidze - Composer
94. Khatuna Gogua - Production Manager
95. Khvicha Emiridze - Director
96. Kote Abdushelishvili - Director, producer
97. Kote Kalandadze - Parachute Films - Director, Scriptwriter
98. Kote Takhaishvili - Director, Producer
99. Lana GhoGhoberidze - Director
100. Leli Miminoshvili - Casting Manager
101. Levan Abdushelishvili - Film Critic
102. Levan Dvali - Culture manager, "Taoba" Film Festival director
103. Levan Gelashvili - film researcher
104. Levan Gelbakhiani - Actor
105. Levan Shubashvili - Director
106. Levan Sikhharulida - Director
107. Levan Tuteridze - Director
108. Lika Glurjidge - Film Critic
109. Liana Mezvrishvili - Producer
110. Maka Gogoladze - Director
111. Maka Kukulava - Scriptwriter
112. Malkhaz Berdzenishvili - Cinematographer
113. Maradia Tsaava - OpioDoc - Director
114. Margo Zubashvili - Director
115. Mari Gulbiani - Director
116. Mariam Bitsadze - 17/07 - Producer
117. Mariam Chachia - Opiodoc, Director, Producer
118. Mariam Chincharauli - Costumes Department
119. Mariam Dvalishvili - Producer
120. Mariam Khachvani - Director
121. Mariam Khukhuneishvili - Actress
122. Mariam Phevsianidze - Director
123. Mariam Zubashvili - Parachute Films - Producer
124. Megi Kobaladze - Actor
125. Mikhael Kvirikadze - Cinematographer
126. Miranda Namicheishvili - Director
127. Nana Djanelidze - Director
128. Nana Jorjadze - Director
129. Nana Samanishvili - Animator
130. Nanka Balakhashvili - Casting
131. Nanuka Khuskivadze - Actress
132. Nata Managadze - Producer
133. Natalia Jugheli - Actress
134. Natia Chikviladze - actor
135. Natia Nikoleishvili - Producer, Director
136. Natia Nikolishvili - Animator, Director
137. Nato Sikhharulidze - Producer
138. Nikoloz Bejanishvili - Director, Producer
139. Nikoloz Motsonelidze - Director
140. Nini Shvelidze - Film Critic
141. Nino Akhvlediani - Director
142. Nino Chichua - 1991 Productions - Producer
143. Nino Dzandzava - Movie Critic
144. Nino Iashvili - 2nd AD
145. Nino Injia - Costume Designer
146. Nino Jincharadze - Takes Film, producer
147. Nino Koridze - Actress, Production Designer
148. Nino Memanishvili - Director
149. Nino Mkheidze - Film Critic, Festival Director
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155. Paata Godziashvili - Sound designer, Producer
156. Paata Inauri - actor
157. Papuna Mosidze - Director
158. Rati Oneli - Director
159. Saba Shengelia - Production Designer, Director
160. Salome Jashi - Director
161. Salome Skhirtladze - Production Design
162. Salome Vepkhvadze - Director
163. Sandro Katamashvili - Animation Director
164. Sandro samkharadze - Actor
165. Sandro Suladze - Director
166. Shalva Mikutishvili - film restorator Luka Beradze -Director
167. Shorena Tevzadze - Director
168. Shota Meskhadze - Director
169. Sopho Bendiashvili - Enkeny Films, producer
170. Sopho Gagua - Casting
171. Sopho Grigolashvili - Actress
172. Sopo Gagua - casting manager
173. Soso Khvedelidze - Actor
174. Tamar Jelja - Director
175. Tamar Kalandadze - Director
176. Tamar Kamushadze - Director
177. Tamar Tatishvili - Movie Professional
178. Tamar Tvaradze - Metro Production - Producer
179. Tatia Skhirtladze - Painter, director
180. Tatia Skhirtladze - Production Designer, Director
181. Tato Kotetishvili - Director, Cinematographer
182. Tekla Djavakhadze - Actress
183. Tekla Machavariani - Producer
184. Temo Macharadze - Cinematographer
185. Teo Baramidze - Production Designer
186. Teo Khatiaishvili - Film Critic
187. Teona Kokrashvili - actor
188. Tiko Nadareishvili - Millimeter Film, Producer
189. Tina Babakishvili - POSTRED, Post Producer
190. Tina Khizanishvili - Casting
191. Tina Shengelia - Costume Designer
192. Tinatin Emiridze - Director
193. Tinatin Kvinikadze - Costume Designer
194. Tinatin Mumladze - Director
195. Tornike Bziava - Director
196. Tornike Gogrichiani - Director, Actor
197. Tsismari Kshutashvili - Kiseki Pictures, producer, director
198. Uta Beria - Director
199. Vaja Zubashvili - Director
200. Vajiko Chachkhiani - Director
201. Vakho Jajamidze - Director
202. Vakhtang Varazi - Director
203. Vako agladze - VFX supervisor
204. Vako Kirkitadze - Producer
205. Vasil Dolidze - Cinematographer
206. Vladimer Katcharava - 20 Steps Productions - Producer
207. Zaza Koshkadze - Scriptwriter
208. Zviad Tsikolia - Director
209. Zviad Mgebry - POSTRED, Composer
210. Giorgi Kvachadze - Producer