

## The US Congress Delegation to Visit Georgia

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

As the US Embassy to Georgia has reported, a US Congressional delegation will visit France, Georgia, and Italy this week. The delegation will be led by US Senator Chris Coons, Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations, and a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Joining Senator Coons' delegation are Senators Gary Peters, Chairman of the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee, and Bob Casey, and Representatives Stephanie Murphy, Kathleen Rice, David Cicilline, and Ted Deutch.

According to the embassy, the delegation will hold meetings with US diplomats, senior government officials, and civil society leaders in each country to discuss the importance of sustaining and strengthening the trans-Atlantic alliance, maintaining a forceful response against Russia's war against Ukraine, and bolstering European security. The delegation will also address issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic, global hunger, the refugee crisis, climate change, and non-proliferation.

"The United States must lead the way in addressing the global challenges and opportunities before us, from global security to the COVID-19 pandemic to developing a 21st-century global agenda built on democratic values, but we can only do that together with our friends and allies," Senator Coons noted.

Senator Peters noted that the Russian aggression against Ukraine reaffirmed the need to further strengthen close partnerships with European allies.

"The trans-Atlantic alliance has been steadfast and in lock-step in responding to Vladimir Putin and supporting the Ukrainian military and people. I look forward to meeting with our partners and allies in Europe to build off our joint efforts and continue upholding our mutual



**The meetings will focus on the importance of sustaining and strengthening the trans-Atlantic alliance, maintaining a forceful response against Russia's war against Ukraine, and bolstering European security.**

democratic values," Peters noted.

Senator Casey noted that against the background of Russian aggression on Ukraine, trans-Atlantic alliances are as important as ever. "Putin may have thought he could damage democracy, but the world stands united against him," the senator said.

Meanwhile, Congresswoman Rice stated that she is "honored to take part in this important delegation to reaffirm the strength of our relationships with our European allies," adding that "International alliances are the United States' greatest tool in maintaining global peace and stability".

"I look forward to our meetings and to

discussing how we can continue building a better future as we all recover from the economic and health crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic," Congressman Cicilline said.

Representative Murphy on her part stressed that showing unity and reassuring European allies has become critical for US leaders amid the war in Ukraine.

"Our delegation will travel to France and Italy, two of America's strongest allies, and Georgia, one of NATO's closest partners. I look forward to discussing additional steps we can take to support Ukraine and impose severe costs on Russia," she noted.

### The News in Brief

#### Nuclear Weapon won't be Used in Ukraine, Lavrov Says

BY THE MESSENGER STAFF

According to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Russia will not use nuclear weapons in Ukraine.

At a news conference in Moscow, Lavrov said only conventional weapons would be used.

After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Vladimir Putin ordered nuclear weapons ready, and senior Russian officials said that its use can only take place under certain circumstances.

Lavrov also said that Russia's attack is now concentrated in eastern Ukraine, and the war is entering a new phase.

"The operation in eastern Ukraine, as initially announced, is aimed at the full liberation of the Donetsk and Luhansk republics. This operation will continue.

"A new phase of the war is beginning and I am sure it will be a very important moment for the whole special operation," Lavrov said.

Russia has called for a cease-fire in Azovstal, a factory in Mariupol, and has given it 14:00 to 16:00 Moscow time.

A statement from the Ministry of Defence said that Russia was demanding the release of the weapons "on the basis of a catastrophic situation and pure humanitarian principles."



Besides Georgia, the delegation will be visiting France and Italy.



Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 3.0530; Euro - 3.2930; GBP - 3.9756; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.8419; Swiss Franc - 3.2194

# Decreased Export and Increased Import — Foreign Trade with Russia



By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The National Statistics Center of Georgia (Geostat) released a report on foreign trade in March, which shows that Georgia has increased its import ties with Russia since Russia started the war in Ukraine. In March, the country bought \$ 91.6 million worth of Russian goods, up \$2.2 million (2.5%) from the same period last year.

The leading positions in Russian imports are held by energy carriers - oil, natural gas and electricity. The increase in imports was mainly due to the rise in energy prices.

Oil and oil products - \$ 21.9 million, an increase of 89% over the previous year; Petroleum gasses and gaseous hydrocarbons - \$ 15.3 million, a decrease of 27% over the previous year; Electricity - \$7.8 million, an increase of 227% over the previous year; Coal coke and semi-coke - \$5.8 million, an increase of 184% over the previous year; Margarine - \$3.4 million, an increase of 78% over the previous year.

Unlike imports, exports to

Russia are reduced. In March, Georgia exported \$ 16.9 million worth of goods to Russia, which is 56% less than the previous year.

If in March 2021 Russia exported 9.5 million wines, this year exports amounted to 5.4 million. In addition, 9.8 million ferroalloys were exported to Russia in March last year, while in March this year, manganese products were not exported to Russia at all.

Natural grape wine - \$5.4 million, a decrease of 44% over the previous year; Mineral and fresh water - \$4.9 million, a decrease of 15%; Cigarettes - \$0.9 million, an increase of 14%; Alcoholic beverages - \$ 0.8 million, a decrease of 69%; Carbonated drinks with sugar - \$ 0.7 million, a decrease of 57% over the previous year.

As expected, a significant drop of 93% was observed in Georgia's exports to Ukraine. If in 2021 Georgia's exports to Ukraine were \$24.6 million, this year it amounted to \$1.8 million. Of that, \$ 1.3 million was not direct exports but humanitarian aid.

## Germany supports the sustainable use of green hydrogen in Georgia with a grant of 1,3 Mio EUR

The German Government through KfW will support the development of a green hydrogen market in Georgia in cooperation with the Georgian Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development and the Georgian Energy Development Fund (GEDF).

The Georgian Government and KfW agreed a few months ago in a Declaration of Intent (DoI) for the "Promotion of Green Hydrogen in Georgia" to develop a first reference project along the green hydrogen value chain.

As a next step, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has approved a new grant of EUR 1,3 Mio. for technical assistance to support the intro-

duction of the green hydrogen technology, to develop a conducive legal framework and to elaborate on related topics concerning overall energy security of Georgia.

"With the help of our German partners, Georgia will be the first country in the region to develop hydrogen technologies. This will be a further step towards promoting energy independence and helping to move the energy market to a sustainable low-carbon energy supply," said Giorgi Chikovani, Director of the Georgian Energy Development Fund (GEDF).

"Diversification of the energy sector and energy security are crucial issues for Georgia, especially against the backdrop of current events in Ukraine. Germany supports Georgia on this path, and our green hydrogen project is an important step in this regard", says Hubert Knirsch, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany.

## Russia's Share in Georgia's Tourism Revenues in March was 20%



By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

In March, 20% of Georgia's tourism revenues (\$ 25 million) came from Russia. In March 2022, the country received a total of \$ 175 million from tourism, which is 71.3% of the 2019 figure - the highest recovery rate since the pandemic.

As for the share of other countries in March, 17% of tourism revenues came from Belarus, followed by Turkey (9%), Israel (9%) and the European Union (8%).

According to Galt & Taggart, the total figure also includes the expenditures of migrants from Russia, Belarus and Ukraine who

arrived in Georgia after the start of the Russian-Ukrainian war in the end of February. The exact number of migrants is not yet available, however, they create additional opportunities in different sectors of Georgia's economy, such as trade, real estate, IT and such. This impact has already been reflected in increased prices in the real estate market.

Such as trade, real estate, IT, etc. and their impact has already been reflected in increased prices in the real estate market.

"Baseline scenario, we forecast a 75% recovery in tourism revenue in 2022 compared to 2019, although given the migrant effect, the likelihood of a

faster recovery (85%) is increased," the investment bank said in a statement.

As for the number of visitors, 188,394 international visitors visited Georgia in March 2022, which is an annual growth of 236.9% and 37% of the 2019 level. This increase was mainly due to the growth of tourists, which amounted to 49% of the 2019 level.

In March, Turkey led in the number of visitors (22.5% of the total), followed by Russia (12%) and Armenia (11.7%). It should be noted that the number of arrivals from Israel, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Saudi Arabia and Uzbekistan has exceeded the 2019 level.

### Weather

Wednesday, April 20

Day Mostly Cloudy

High: 18°C

Night Mostly Cloudy

Low: 8°C

Thursday, April 21

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 22°C

Night Rain

Low: 10°C

published by

**The Messenger**

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All contributions should be submitted by e-mail.

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# 30 years of diplomatic relations between the Hellenic Republic and Georgia

Even Jason, the head of the Argonauts seeking for the Golden Fleece, couldn't have imagined the waves of people's movement that would follow his mission. As a most recent proof, in the 19th century, Pontic Greeks coming to Georgia and since 1992 Georgians immigrating to Greece, would create a unique set of interaction between our two peoples rendering Greek - Georgian bilateral relations unique throughout history.

In 1992, Georgia regained its modern independence. Greece, was then among the very first countries to support Georgian peoples' desire to live in a free and sovereign country. During the difficult years that ensued, Greece contributed significantly to the reconstruction of the country and the relief of the struggling population, welcoming generously in its territory thousands of Georgians, many of whom are today fully integrated in the Greek society.

In the political sphere, relations have always been strong and friendly, based on Greece's interest in maintaining strong ties with the area of the South Caucasus and the Black Sea and on Georgia's interest in developing relations with one of the oldest Member States of the EU and NATO. During these 30 years, Greece maintained a constructive stance towards Georgia, remaining faithful to the principles of its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, favouring its Association Agreement with the EU in 2014 and extending a big hand of friendship to the Georgian citizens, by supporting, in 2017, the abolishment of the visa prerequisite for their travels to the Schengen area. It is on that very basis that we continue to cooperate constructively, while at the same time sparing no effort in further strengthening our dialogue and cooperation.

30 years of diplomatic relations have also been marked by a growing of economic ties. In the field of development cooperation, only in the period 1999-2020, the Greek development assistance to Georgia amounted to over 36 million Euros, covering a wide range of critical fields, such as emergency response and humanitarian assistance, health, agriculture, social infrastructure & services, banking & financial services, institutional development and modernization of public administration, civil society, tourism, education, small and medium sized enterprises

support. Moreover, the two countries developed bilateral trade flows exceeding annually 50 million Euros on an average level. But the most noteworthy fact of economic nature is that throughout this period, Greece remained among the top countries to indirectly contribute to the Georgian economy with millions of dollars of remittances generated by the working Georgian Diaspora in Greece. Indicatively, remittances from Greece, in 2010-2019, amounted annually to 156 million USD, reaching 240 million USD in 2021, according to the data of National Bank of Georgia. Still, there is plenty of room for further development of bilateral trade, and for further strengthening Greek-Georgian business partnerships in fields of mutual interest, such as the agricultural sector, the energy efficiency where Greece has know-how, waste management, shipping, transports, the blue economy and finally research and innovation between start-ups and other actors from the Greek and Georgian innovation ecosystems.

Relations in the fields of culture and education have also been very effective. During these 30 years, more than 100 students have received scholarships to study in Greek universities, religious and military schools. On the other hand, there is great interest in Georgia in the Greek language, literature and culture. The Institute of Classical, Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies at the State University of Tbilisi has currently 91 undergraduate and Master's students, while more than 400 pupils at 16 selected schools across Georgia are being taught Greek as a foreign language. Likewise, Georgian is now being taught systematically in Athens and Thessaloniki for a large number of the Georgian diaspora.

Over the coming years, Greece will continue to stand with the people of Georgia to support shared values and strengthen the institutions necessary to protect them. Along with our European partners, we would like to see a modern state with consolidated democratic institutions and a robust economy that can create jobs and more opportunities for Georgians. We can look back at these 30 years to draw lessons, but we mainly need to focus on the steps forward in our common effort to build a prosperous, secure and resilient democracy in Georgia. Greece and the Greek people are proud to be part of this process.

