

"Marathon for Ukraine" Held in Kakheti



BY MESSENGER STAFF

Telavi, near Lopota.

A pro-Ukrainian charity sports event "Marathon for Ukraine" was held in

The event is organized by the International Foundation for Sports, Tourism and Youth.

Hundreds of people took part in the event, including Ukrainians who had temporarily arrived in Georgia due to the war.

Mileage is supported by Georgian Business Association, Chiaturmanganum Georgia, Tbilisi City Hall.

Prime Minister: Georgia is Committed to European Standards and Values

BY MESSENGER STAFF

Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili said at a panel discussion in Bratislava that Georgia is moving forward in all directions, now it's Europe's turn to decide.

"As you know, Georgia went through the war in 2008 - much earlier than Ukraine, much earlier than Crimea. We paid the highest price. Who paid this price? Georgian people. We also had two wars with Russia in the 90s, after we gained independence - regained independence.

Therefore, it is our purposeful choice. I would say that this is our civilizational choice. I do not want to speculate. Of course, we talk to our friends about it. We talk to European friends. I have personally had conversations with my colleagues. I held many meetings with them and had telephone conversations too. I was in Brussels 10 days or 2 weeks ago and met with leaders. Of course, my message is that Georgia has done its homework and now we are waiting for the decision of the European Union. We must understand that this is a political decision. Granting candidate status is a political, strategic and moral decision. It is also symbolic. So for example, what message are we sending to Russia? Let's take Georgia. I will not talk about other countries and I will only say about Georgia: Georgia is committed to European standards, values, EU values. We have paid the highest price, we are implementing reforms, we are moving forward in all directions. We have signed the Association Agreement, the Free Trade Agreement, the visa-free travel regime and the application for membership. Now it's Europe's turn. It must decide now," Irakli Gharibashvili said.



Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.9707; Euro - 3.1890; GBP - 3.7315; 100 Russian Ruble - 4.7773; Swiss Franc - 3.0954

Tskhinvali Referendum Not Held, But it Means Little to Nothing

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

The referendum on joining the Tskhinvali region occupied by Russia, which was to be held on July 17, will no longer be held. There have been found various reasons for the abolition: from lack of money to “legal” arguments. However, the main headline here is that the Kremlin engaged in war with Ukraine and no longer wanted to have a new problem in relations with Georgia.

The topic of the referendum in the occupied Tskhinvali region appeared during the “presidential elections”. The former president of Tskhinvali, Anatoly Bibilov, has proposed the idea of holding a referendum on “joining Russia” as the main theme of his so-called election campaign. After the election defeat, a referendum was still scheduled for May 24.

Now they are discussing the versions of where the idea of the referendum came from - it was Bibilov’s initiative if this idea was

lobbied by any group of the Moscow government.

The idea of holding a referendum was not expressed in Moscow. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said at the time that Moscow had neither taken nor planned any steps to hold a referendum. He later said that Bibilov’s question in the referendum was “legally incorrect” and needed to be “processed”.

The “negative” signal coming from Moscow was accountable to Tskhinvali’s new puppet ruler, Alan Gagloev - who, of course, swore that “unification with Russia” was his dream, but held a referendum without an “agreement with Moscow.” Gagloev named “lack of money” as the reason for the cancellation of the referendum. According to him, holding a referendum would cost 32.5 million Russian rubles (about 500 thousand dollars). Then “legal” arguments were used - it was announced that the referendum question was wrong and at the same time disagreed with Moscow.

The reason why Moscow did not want to hold a referendum in the occupied region was stated by Konstantin Zatulin, the first deputy head of the Russian Duma Committee on CIS issues. According to him, the referendum in Tskhinvali in Georgia would provoke a “flow of emotions”, while Moscow is conducting a “special military operation” in Ukraine, and in such a case “we do not deserve to be bearded for Georgia.”

The cancellation of the referendum does not mean that Moscow refuses to annex the occupied Tskhinvali region. No, it’s just not worth doing now, as “additional problems” may arise. Official Tbilisi, of course, welcomed the cancellation of the referendum, which would have created additional problems for the Georgian Dream as well, as the referendum would be a clear indication of the ineffectiveness of Russia’s “irritability policy.” However, with the cancellation of the referendum in Tskhinvali, nothing changed in Moscow’s

policy, it soon became apparent. Tskhinvali actually mocked Georgian President Salome Zurbishvili, who said on May 26 that Georgia “did not intend to use force” against the occupied territories where Georgian citizens live.

“South Ossetia” e. m Foreign Minister Dmitry Medvedev said that “there are no Georgian citizens in South Ossetia,” while in Tskhinvali they said they would “continue to strengthen the border with Georgia.” It was at this time that Putin called for a simplified grant of “dual citizenship” between “South Ossetia” and Russia.

The ongoing war in Ukraine does not hinder Moscow’s activity in the direction of Abkhazia, so another occupied region of Georgia is even more closely connected with Russia. Despite the Tskhinvali puppet government, their Sukhumi counterparts seem to be wary of “Abkhazian independence.”

Despite the ongoing war in Ukraine, Moscow is moving

away from Abkhazia and accelerating its policy of “absorption” of the occupied region. Moscow intends to abolish the border checkpoint with Abkhazia, which in fact means the demolition of the border, as in the case of Russia-Belarus. Russian propagandist Margarita Simonyan states that “Abkhazia is mentally inseparable from Russia.”

Moscow demands a solution to the issue of “real estate registration” in Abkhazia for foreign citizens (ie Russian citizens). Moscow demands an end to discrimination against the “Russian-speaking population” in Abkhazia and the abolition of the entry in the election law that obliges a parliamentary candidate to “know the Abkhazian language.” Abkhazian puppet authorities prefer to discuss “threats from Georgia.”

The war in Ukraine and the “acceptable to Moscow” nature of the Georgian government do not in any way stop Russia’s annexationist policy towards the occupied regions of Georgia. Russia remains aggressive towards Georgia as well, and if Georgia loses support from the West, it will only encourage Moscow’s aggressive plans.

The News in Brief

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Russia Responsible for Grain Shortage, Borrell Says

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Joseph Borrell said Russia was directly responsible for the grain shortage. “Russia is directly responsible for any deficit in international grain trade and instead of stopping the aggression, it is actively trying to shift the responsibility to the imposed sanctions,” Borrell wrote.

The President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, said that the export of 22 million tons of grain by Russia has been suspended due to the blockade of major export routes through the

Black and Azov Seas. The Kremlin denies the allegations and blames Ukraine for the blockade of the port. Yesterday, Russian President Vladimir Putin told Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan that Moscow would support “unhindered” exports of Ukrainian grain from Ukrainian ports.

Calls to Avoid Offending Russia Only Diminish Countries, Says Kuleba

According to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Dmitry Kuleba, talking about avoiding the humiliation of Russia again reduces the number of countries that demand it. This is how he responds to the statement of the President of France, Emmanuel Macron.

“Calls to avoid offending Russia can only humiliate France and all the countries that demand it. Because Russia is humiliating itself. It is better for everyone to focus on how to give Russia its place. It will bring peace and save many lives,” Kuleba writes.

Weather

Monday, June 6

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 34°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 19°C

Tuesday, June 7

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 30°C

Night T-storm
Low: 19°C

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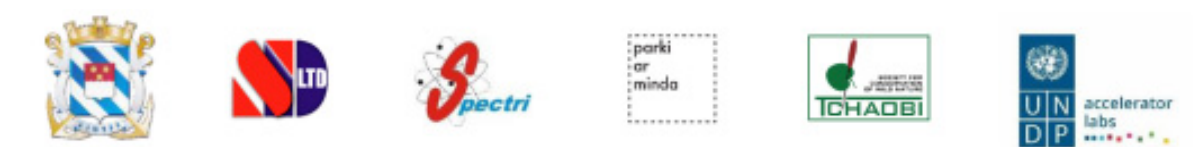
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Communities in Batumi celebrate the culture of recycling

UNDP Accelerator Lab and the Batumi City Hall promote plastic collection and recycling

BATUMI. 5 June 2022 – On the eve of World Environment Day, over 100 residents of Batumi’s Khimshiashvili and Ninoshvili streets joined a public outdoor event promoting the culture of recycling. Organised with support from the Accelerator Lab of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the community event followed a behavioural experiment carried out earlier this year, proving that the citizens would welcome recycling if there was better access to municipal infrastructure and services combined with an awareness-raising campaign.

Attended by representatives of UNDP, the Batumi City Hall, local environmental activists, volunteers and the district residents, the event featured workshops on waste separation, a quiz about recycling, a display of products made from recycled plastic, and other eco-conscious activities

for children and youth.

UNDP Deputy Resident Representative in Georgia **Anna Chernyshova** and Batumi Vice Mayor **Lela Surmanidze** handed over the certificates of recognition to the activists and volunteers engaged in the awareness-raising campaign, acknowledging the importance of the local grassroots movement in achieving systemic change.

“Batumi is a tourism-oriented and rapidly growing city, facing a huge challenge in sustainable waste management. UNDP is happy to support local authorities, civil society and communities in their joint efforts to build public awareness on waste separation and create municipal systems that benefit people and the environment,” Chernyshova noted.

The partnership with local community organisations and Batumi and Tbilisi City Halls started last September when 40 transparent collection bins were

installed in two cities’ residential areas. This was followed by a locally targeted educational campaign on plastic waste collection in the pilot districts. The probe resulted in collecting nearly half a ton of polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic waste in just two months, from January through March 2022, revealing important behavioural patterns and providing ground for practical recommendations.

Currently, Georgia generates around 900,000 tons of waste annually with more than 75 percent ending up in landfill sites. According to the National Strategy on Waste Management, Georgia commits to recycling 50 percent of its plastic waste by 2025 and 80 percent by 2030. UNDP continues to support Batumi and other cities in Georgia to meet this ambitious goal, introduce effective plastic waste separation practices and promote sustainable lifestyles.

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