

MEP Cramon Positively Assesses Ruling Party's Proposal for Fulfilling EU Conditions



BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Member of the European Parliament, Viola von Cramon welcomed and positively assessed the ruling Georgian Dream party's proposal for fulfilling the 12-point conditions outlined by the European Union for granting the country the membership candidate status this year.

MEP called on the ruling party to be inclusive and on domestic opposition to be a part of the proposal and work against the polarization of the domestic political environment, which is one of the priorities

of the EU conditions. "I understand that the opposition would rather stick to the Charles Michel Agreement, but nevertheless I think it's important to consider if the ruling party offers something."

Von Cramon stressed the responsibility of the ruling party, saying they have to reach out to the opposition; make sure there's a place for the opposition.

"There should be a broader circle of MPs who are working on that agenda. But nevertheless, the opposition must be ready to take up. Hopefully, they would like to be part of this," she added.

MEP also stated that she can not support the idea of a "technical interim government of national accord," raised by the opposition for the implementation of the EU conditions, by noting an elected Government was already in place.

"Georgia has a government and people-elected parliament. There were violations, but overall, international organizations said there was a democratic process. Therefore, I can not support the idea of forming a technical government. I want to see the readiness of political parties to take the necessary measures for depo-

larization." The Political Council of the ruling Georgian Dream party discussed the matter of fulfilling the conditions last Friday. The party offered a moratorium to the opposition, NGOs, and media to reduce political polarization. As Chairman Irakli Kobakhidze stated, a polarization monitoring group will be established on the basis of the Parliament of Georgia. According to him, the ruling party will ensure the implementation of the 12 points established by the EU at the right time and in due quality in accordance with the plan, which he presented that day.

Kobakhidze Says EU candidate Status Guaranteed if Georgia Joins War, Adds Must be Avoided

BY MESSENGER STAFF

Irakli Kobakhidze, the chairman of Georgian Dream, stated that if we participate in the current war, our eligibility to become an EU candidate in December will be assured.

He asserts that Ukraine's inclusion as an EU candidate is a result of its involvement in the conflict.

"The connection between the war and the candidate status was directly emphasized by the leaders of the European Union. They directly said that Ukraine was granted candidate status because of the war. It was because of the war that it was offered to apply and because of the war it was given the status of a candida-



te, which is not my statement, it is the statement of the leaders of the European Union. Because of this, we can draw a very logical conclusion - if Georgia were or if tomorrow it finds itself in the same situation as Ukraine, in this case, we are guaranteed the status of a candidate. We have very high hopes that we will be able to get candidate status in December without this.

If we get involved in the military conflict, EU candidate status will be guaranteed for us in December, this is simple logic. We do not talk on purpose about who is asking and who is not asking for our involvement in the war. We would like to remind you that it was the radical opposition and the related NGOs who

demanding the imposition of sanctions on Russia, which would increase tenfold the risks of Georgia's involvement in the war. Second, they directly demanded the sending of volunteers by planes to Ukraine, which means direct involvement of Georgia in the military conflict.

If a war starts in Georgia, it will be difficult for Russia, because several tens of thousands of soldiers with their equipment and everything will have to be in Georgia, wasting time. The second front would complicate the situation for Russia on the Ukrainian front, unlike Moldova - nothing would be complicated there. This war would be devastating for Georgia. Therefore, we must do everything to avoid this war," said Irakli Kobakhidze.

EXCHANGE RATES: US DOLLAR - 2.8710 | EURO - 3.9574 | GBP - 3.4564 | 100 RUSSIAN RUBLE - 5.6618 | SWISS FRANC - 3.9738 |

Pride Week 2022 to be Potential Stepping-Stone For Enhancing LGBTQI+ Rights Protection In Georgia, UNDP, Embassies Say



► The joint statement is issued by the United Nations Development Programme, the Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, the Embassies to Georgia of the Czech Republic, France, Israel, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

The Pride Week 2022 served as a potential stepping-stone for enhancing LGBTQI+ rights protection in Georgia, says the joint statement of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), EU Delegation, and Embassies of the Czech Republic, France, Israel, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States in Georgia.

The statement welcomes the successful completion of Pride Week 2022, hoping that this year's successful holding of events marks a step forward in protecting the rights of LGBTQI+ persons, including their right to freedom of assembly. The joint statement expresses gratitude toward the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the police for maintaining public order and ensuring safety during the Pride Week

events, also highlighting the involvement of the Administration of the Government of Georgia in the coordination and preparatory process.

“By protecting the rights of vulnerable groups, the state stands up for ensuring basic human rights protection for all and the building of an inclusive society that embraces diversity and empowers and protects all people, with no exception. We encourage further steps to be taken by Georgia to reinforce its national commitments in the human rights area, including through the adoption of a robust National Human Rights Strategy and Action Plan,” the statement reads.

It is further noted that It is vital for state policies and practices to ensure that every citizen's human rights and liberties are protected regardless of disability, religion or belief, national, ethnic or social origin, sex, race, sexual orientation, gender iden-



► This year, LGBT+ rights group Tbilisi Pride was organized without a public March for Dignity due to safety concerns.

tity or any other grounds. In this regard, it is noted that the Georgian authorities must properly follow up on the anti-Tbilisi pride events of 5 July 2021, including the full investigation and prosecution of the instigators and organizers of violence.

“We remain committed to supporting Georgia to further enhance the protection

of LGBTQI+ rights, prevent and combat discrimination and violence against LGBTQI+ communities, and strengthen the social protection of vulnerable LGBTQI+ persons by providing housing solutions and improving access to employment, education, and healthcare,” reads the statement.

NEWS IN BRIEF

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Georgia Ranks First in the Open Budget Index

The Open Budget Index ranks Georgia first in the world. The information was reported by the German Embassy in Georgia, which said in the statement that this impressive achievement of the country is the result of a number of reforms implemented in the field of public finance, such as improving medium-term planning, introducing software budgeting, increasing accountability, introducing and improving electronic public finance management systems, introducing and improving public finance management mechanisms, introducing mechanisms promoting citizen engagement, publication of budgetary documentation, preparation of citizen guides and other related measures.

According to the results of the 2021 survey of budget transparency published by the International Budget Partnership, Georgia ranked first among the 120 countries of the world by 87 points from 100 points.

“On behalf of German development cooperation, the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ), together with other partners, supports the Government of Georgia in implementing reforms in the management of public finances, especially at the local level,” the German Embassy said in a statement.

National Tourism Administration – 64,1% of Tourist Visits Restored in June

The National Tourism Administration published statistical data for the month of June, according to which 445,894 international travelers visited Georgia, an increase of 185.5% compared to the same period of 2021, the recovery ratio for international travelers is 51% compared to the pre-pandemic period.

The number of international tourist visits in June was 302,602, which is + 126.7% higher than the same period last year, and tourist visits are restored by 64.1% compared to the month of June 2019. According to the administration, in January-June 2022, 1,625,928 international travelers visited Georgia, an increase of +234.5% compared to the 6 months of 2021, and the recovery was 42.1% compared to the same period in 2019. So far in 2022, the number of international tourist visits was 1,209,272, which is +186.3% higher than the same period last year.

The Russian Federation occupies the first place in the statistics, of which 90,239 citizens entered last month, this is 503% higher than the previous year. After Russia, comes Turkey - 62,000 visitors have entered from there. The next is Armenia with 61,974 visitors, an increase compared to the previous year 365%, Israel - 20,555 visitors, an increase of 30%, and Ukraine - 15,273 visitors, an increase of 1%. The top 10 countries also include Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Belarus, and Uzbekistan.

THURSDAY		JULY 7	
Day		Partly cloudy	High: 29°C
Night		Clear	Low: 18°C
FRIDAY		JULY 8	
Day		Sunshine	High: 31°C
Night		Partly cloudy	Low: 20°C

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