

## Kobakhidze Says Ruling party Ready to Adopt Constitutional Amendments to Lower Threshold From 5% to 2%

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The ruling party is ready to adopt constitutional amendments to lower the threshold from 5% to 2% for 2024 and all subsequent parliamentary elections if the country receives EU candidate status. Chairman of the ruling party Georgian Dream, Irakli Kobakhidze spoke about this at a briefing held in the party.

"No later than one month after the EU grants Georgia candidate status in December, the Parliament of Georgia will adopt a constitutional law in all 3 readings, according to which the 2024 and subsequent parliamentary elections will be held with a fully-proportional system and a 2% electoral threshold. We accept this political commitment from the political council of the party and the parliamentary majority before the European Council and the European Commission."

He explained to the media that since the topic of threshold is not among the 12 conditions that must be met for candidate status, they do not plan to lower the threshold until a decision is made by the EU.

"Setting a relatively low threshold, which means giving a certain opportunity to the 'National Movement', can be worth it to us only if we get some very important benefits for the country with this step," he clarified.

Kobakhidze says that a high electoral threshold is appropriate in conditions of high political polarization.

"Reducing polarization also seriously reduces the risks associated with lowering the threshold. Therefore, there is a direct logical connection between obtaining candidate status, reducing polarization, and the feasibility of setting a lower threshold," he said.

The Parliament of Georgia adopted the constitutional amendments related to the elections in the first reading on September 7, 2021. According to this document,



the next 2 parliamentary elections were to be held with a 2% threshold. According to the same document, the situation of the parliamentary opposition was improving as well, it would be possible to create a faction by 4 MPs, while today 7 MPs are needed.

Lowering the electoral threshold was a part of the so-called It April 19 agreement, which the ruling party declared void after 100 days due to the largest opposition party

not joining the agreement and saying that it would not return to the document.

Meanwhile, the Georgian Parliament is set to start the early work for fulfilling the 12-point outline established by the European Union for granting the country the membership candidate status, with relevant sessions of the lawmaking body.

The first session in the work was held by the Committee on Procedural Issues and Rules of the Parliament. A Parli-

mentary working group will work on a bill on deoligarchization - related to one of the points in the EU outline - while a monitoring group will be drawn up to promote reducing the polarization of the political environment of the country.

Charles Michel, the President of the European Council, on Wednesday said the EU was ready to grant the membership candidate status to Georgia once the priorities outlined by the bloc are addressed.

## Khoshtaria Demands SSS Chief and Employee and MIA Minister Face Personal Sanctions

By MESSENGER STAFF

Elene Khoshtaria, the Droa party's leader, demands that the State Security Service chief, Grigol Liluashvili, the Minister of Internal Affairs, Vakhtang Gomelauri, and Security Service employee Koba Kobidze each face personal sanctions.

"Grigol Liluashvili - he was a very important figure in Bidzina Ivanishvili's personal affairs, and the Security Service that he heads today is not the security service of the country, but of Bidzina Ivanishvili's oligarchic rule. In addition to blackmail, political persecution, etc.,



we also have information that he was involved in the case of a ship with sanctioned cargo, which, of course, needs to be studied and further clarified. I won't say anything more on dirty blackmails about the personal life which characterizes the SSG system, the surveillance, including the surveillance of diplomats.

Koba Kobidze - he is the head of the so-called Oto. He is directly involved in wiretapping, blackmailing, etc.

Vakhtang Gomelauri - he is also part of the personal entourage of Bidzina Ivanishvili, he is his personal bodyguard, who was appointed as the head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia. Instead of

serving the country, he specifically serves the interests of Bidzina Ivanishvili. Of course, it's our partner's business as to when the sanctions will be, and what they will be, we are not going to speculate on it.

At the same time, we should understand that one of the powerful weapons of de-oligarchization is to evade the sanctions on the country. At the same time, we should evade the country the status of the one which participates in the bloody campaign in Ukraine, and let's hold accountable those particular members of the oligarchic government, along with Bidzina Ivanishvili, who put the country in this situation," said Elene Khoshtaria.

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# Georgian Delegation Presents Report on Implemented Reforms to UN Human Rights Committee



► The report was prepared in 2020 by the Ministry of Justice along with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other state agencies.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Georgian delegation has presented the latest report on the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in Georgia to the United Nations Human Rights Committee. The report was prepared in 2020 by the Ministry of Justice along with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other state agencies.

On July 5-6, Deputy Justice Minister Beka Dzamashvili delivered the Govern-

ment's fifth periodic report to the UN body, touching upon legislative and institutional reforms implemented since 2014 for ensuring effective provision of human rights and timely fulfillment of international obligations.

The Georgian delegation also focused on human rights-related challenges in the Russian-occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali (South Ossetia) regions. As the official statement reads, members of the Committee were provided with detailed information on historical decisions made

by the European Court of Human Rights and the International Criminal Court in the Hague, which legally confirmed the Russian occupation of Georgian territories and responsibility for the violations committed during the 2008 war", the Ministry noted.

The report also covered reforms in the judicial system, steps taken to strengthen the penitentiary system and law enforcement agencies, as well as anti-corruption measures, ensuring freedom of expression and assembly, electoral reform, enforce-



► The Committee's recommendations are expected to be sent to the Georgian delegation in writing, with the latter to report on their implementation in 2024.

ment of anti-discrimination legislation, and reforms carried out by Georgia to eliminate violence against women and ensure the protection of the rights of children and persons with disabilities. The Georgian delegation also answered questions of the members of the Committee on current issues in the country.

According to the Ministry, the Committee "positively assessed" the mechanisms to ensure the implementation of the recommendations of UN monitoring bodies. The Committee's recommendations are expected to be sent to the Georgian delegation in writing, with the latter to report on their implementation in 2024.

## Georgia's oldest protected area benefits from SMART technology

UNDP, the Caucasus Nature Fund and the Agency of Protected Areas work together to improve biodiversity monitoring in Georgia

**TBILISI.** 7 July 2022 – Lagodekhi is Georgia's oldest protected area established more than a century ago, in 1912. It covers up to 25,000 hectares of woodlands, rivers and lakes and is famous for its diverse climate zones, pristine landscapes and tourist attractions. Lagodekhi is also home to a range of endangered and rare species, such as East Caucasian Tur, red deer, brown bear, Caucasian Grouse, Caucasian Snowcock, Caucasian oak and Caucasian persimmon.

The Agency of Protected Areas under Georgia's Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture manages this vast terrain to safeguard natural treasures from illegal hunting and logging and collect information about biodiversity and climate change.

To help the rank of 20 professional rangers fulfil their daunting and sometimes dangerous patrolling task, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Caucasus Nature Fund (CNF), with financial support from the Global Environ-

ment Facility (GEF), equipped them with modern biodiversity monitoring technology.

The Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) enables rangers to use smartphones and tablets to collect real-time information on poaching incidents and wildlife sightings and detect signs of plant infestation. Data collected during patrols are being processed in a unified database, with software then shaping the choice and frequency of ranger patrol routes.

Twelve protected areas are now piloting the SMART technology to then introduce it to Georgia's all 93 protected areas in 2023.

UNDP and CNF assisted the Agency of Protected Areas to purchase the SMART equipment and train over 260 officers and rangers through face-to-face courses, practical exercises and a specially created e-learning platform. The platform offers rangers SMART tutorials and other training programmes focused on biodiversity monitoring, plant diseases, tourist trail management and visitor services. It also helps rangers to manage poaching incidents and

other violations and illegal actions. The e-learning platform was created by the civil society organization 'Environment and Development', using UNDP's corporate e-learning tool as a model.

Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture Yuri Nozadze, Chairperson of the Agency of Protected Areas David Iosebashvili, UNDP Deputy Representative Anna Chernyshova and Executive Director of the Caucasus Nature Fund Tobias Muenchmeyer visited Lagodekhi National Park on 5 July.

"Georgia's history of managing and developing protected areas spans more than a century. Lagodekhi Nature Reserve, which was established 110 years ago, is the first protected area in Georgia and the entire Caucasus. Its territory covered around 3,500 hectares at that time. Today, Georgia's protected areas have been expanded to 800,000 hectares. The modern SMART technology will improve patrolling and make protected areas' management more effective. Special software will process

unified data on biodiversity and law enforcement. The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture pays special attention to improving the social conditions of rangers and equipping them with modern technology in line with international experience. Donor agencies provide critical support for this effort," Nozadze said.

"UNDP congratulates Lagodekhi Protected Areas on its 110th anniversary. It is a privilege to help this stunning park to develop and grow. People and the planet need protected areas to save priceless ecosystems, conserve natural resources, maintain food security and water quality, and build resilience to climate change," Chernyshova said. UNDP support for Georgia's protected areas draws on the GEF-funded US\$1.8 million initiative implemented in partnership with the Agency of Protected Areas and CNF. The programme helps improve the management of 12 major protected areas in Georgia and introduce modern approaches to biodiversity monitoring and conservation.

<b>FRIDAY</b>		<b>JULY 8</b>
Day		Sunshine High: <b>32°C</b>
Night		Partly cloudy Low: <b>20°C</b>
<b>SATURDAY</b>		<b>JULY 9</b>
Day		Sunshine High: <b>33°C</b>
Night		Partly cloudy Low: <b>21°C</b>

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