

'Georgian Dream' takes initiative to hold elections electronically in Georgia

By Liza Mchedlidze

The ruling "Georgian Dream" party is taking the initiative to hold elections electronically in Georgia. The chairman of "Georgian Dream" Irakli Kobakhidze made the relevant announcement at a briefing held at the party's office.

According to him, the mentioned decision will be one of the most important constituent parts of the election reform, which will minimize and reduce the problem of manipulation of election results. According to the initiative, voter registration and voting will be carried out using electronic equipment in the majority of polling stations, including all cities and large settlements, which will cover at least 70 percent of voters.

Kobakhidze explained the advantages of their initiative to hold elections electronically. As he said at the briefing, the implementation of the initiative will end speculations, including the so-called carousel principle and other manipulations.

"Regarding this initiative, in particular, all non-radical parliamentary political parties are included in the working group, their initiative was also to discuss this issue. Therefore, we are sure that these initiatives will be supported by them. We have a successful experience in implementing electronic technologies. By-elections were held in 8 precincts in the same Batumi. Voting was also done electronically. This initiative has many positive and no negative sides. Therefore, we expect that this initiative will be highly appreciated. In any case, an objective observer will not be able to make another assessment in this regard," said Kobakhidze.

According to him, if the initiative is implemented, the official results of the elections will be published sooner. As Irakli Kobakhidze said, "3 radical parties are not participating in the process".

"Exit polls have often become the subject of manipulation. As you know, four



exit polls are announced and they are all different. Exit polls will no longer be necessary, official election results will be fully available to the public at 9 o'clock. In addition, the issue of invalid ballots, about which there has been much speculation, will be resolved. The imbalance in the protocols will be corrected, etc. This will be a very important component of the reform, and we are sure that an objective observer will give a very high rating to this initiative. As for other points, we have the same approach to all points. We opened the door as much as possible for all subjects, all political parties, however, you know that 3 radical parties are not participating in the process. Our door is absolutely open. As far as non-governmental organizations are concerned, there is a simple "red line" that has to do with standing on stage and making political demands. There are 3 or 4 non-governmental organizations of this type, which

came out directly with political demands. Of course, their involvement in this process would be absolutely unnatural. The door is open for all other non-governmental organizations," stated Kobakhidze.

According to the chairman of Georgian Dream, Irakli Kobakhidze, elections may be held electronically in large precincts, but not in small precincts.

As Kobakhidze explained at the briefing, after the initiative to hold elections electronically, questions on 10% and 20% will be removed.

"Why do we say 70%? It's likely to be much higher, 80%-90%, but there will be small polling stations where implementing the hardware is simply not cost-effective. There are precincts consisting of 30 voters not only abroad, but also in Georgia. There is no rational implementation of electronic equipment, especially since the number of voters as a whole is very small. About 10% will actually be

discussed. As soon as this equipment is introduced in 70%-80%-90%, naturally, questions on 10% and 20% will be removed. As for overseas precincts, there are often 10-20 people voting per precinct, it can be done there too, however, how cost-effective will it be to bring the equipment there when the number of voters is not large...Let's see, naturally, everything will be discussed. In large districts, it can be conducted electronically, but not in small districts", said Kobakhidze.

In addition, Kobakhidze noted that "this is not about voting remotely, from home". According to Kobakhidze, the issue of remote voting, including in the case of representatives of the Georgian diaspora, is associated with great risks.

Kobakhidze explained that the initiative to hold elections electronically implies participation in voting at polling stations through the equipment, and the risks of remote voting should be weighed.

By Liza Mchedlidze

The head of "Fair Elections" (ISFED) Nino Dolidze responded to Irakli Kobakhidze's statement about conducting elections electronically. She said that ISFED is not against elections being held electronically if all international standards and electoral principles are met.

"We are not negative if all international standards and electoral principles are respected - at this stage, the process of implementing the recommendations of the European Commission is not inclusive. Therefore, the process will have confidence only after a consensus has been reached between all political parties, and among them, the positions of civil organizations will be taken into account."

According to Nino Dolidze, technology is not the only thing that will increase trust in elections.

"Since we were not involved in this process, we do not know the legislative change in detail, we only know this statement made by Irakli Kobakhidze. ISFED's one of our recommendations was that in the future, in terms of eliminat-

ISFED not against electronic elections if meeting international standards



ing human errors and simplifying the processes, it is possible to switch to technologies, although of course all international voting standards must be observed here. Among them, secrecy, etc. Furthermore, it is internationally recommended that the transition be phased in after it is guaranteed that there will be no technical glitches. We are not negative if all international standards and electoral principles are respected.

I think it is possible to introduce it, although how far it is at 70% is certainly a matter of judgment, and in this regard, I think it is important to have a consensus both among the political parties and among all the parties involved. You know that this process was discussed only in the working group, including where we were not civil organizations precisely be-

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.8378; Euro - 2.8872; GBP - 3.3268; 100 Russian Ruble - 4.7185; Swiss Franc - 2.9894

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ISFED not against electronic elections if meeting international standards

cause we were not allowed, and there were no opposition parties, and therefore I want to tell you that the process was not inclusive at this stage and only after that it will have a trust in the process, which consensus will be reached among all political parties and the positions of civil organizations will be considered among them.

Just switching to technology does not guarantee good elections. Technology is

not the only thing that will increase trust in elections. First of all, it is very important, and this is our recommendation, and among them, it is also in the recommendations of Charles Michel, that it is important to staff the election administration.

And also, one of the important points

is the continuation of the constitutional amendment, which was started in order to talk about the improvement of the election process in general," said Nino Dolidze.

The "Georgian Dream" is taking the initiative to hold elections electronically in Georgia. Party Chairman Irakli

Kobakhidze made the relevant statement at a briefing held at the party's office. According to him, this decision will be one of the most important constituent parts of the election reform, which will minimize the problem of manipulation of election results.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Pashinyan speaks to PM Garibashvili on military escalation between Armenia and Azerbaijan



According to the information of the government administration, the Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Garibashvili, talked to the Prime Minister of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan. According to the statement, Pashinyan informed Gharibashvili about another military escalation and the situation created between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

"The conversation was held at the initiative of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan. Nikol Pashinyan informed Irakli Gharibashvili about the situation created as a result of another military escalation and confrontation between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia.

Irakli Gharibashvili expressed hope that the parties

will return to the negotiation table and the situation will be resolved peacefully. The Prime Minister of Georgia once again confirmed the readiness of Georgia to carry out active mediation for de-escalation and peace in the region", the statement reads.

After the clashes on the bor-

der of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Armenia appealed to Moscow,

the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the United Nations for help.

Intense fighting on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border started on September 13, around 00:05. Azerbaijan accuses Armenia of organizing large-scale sabotage and provocations and says that they started acting in response to all this.

Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze: NGOs are political parties

The general secretary of "Georgian Dream" and the Mayor of Tbilisi, Kakha Kaladze, talked to journalists regarding the role of NGOs in politics:

"Non-governmental organizations are involved in politics, we listen to political statements, and they are directly represented

as a party. They are political parties," Kaladze said.

According to him, the content of a non-governmental organization is absolutely different in relation to non-governmental organizations operating in Georgia.

"Not only should funding be transparent, but all their actions should be transparent. They should be apolitical and unfortunately for us, everything is going upside down. The attitude towards non-governmental organizations in society is their merit. You have seen all these years, in all the past periods, during the election process, after the election, what kind of agenda they have. Unfortunately, they are ordinary political parties. When your name is a non-governmental organization and you are involved in the falsification of PVT. It is very

heavy in terms of being directly involved in a revolutionary scenario. This was one of the main and most important components



that "Georgian Dream" exposed, and after the disclosure of the leaders of "Georgian Dream", this topic, which was very serious, was raised," said Kakha Kaladze.

Weather

Wednesday, September 14

Day Rain
High: 25°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 14°C

Thursday, September 15

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 27°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 14°C

ფესტივალის დამფუძნებელი
ლიანა ისაკაძე
Founder of the Festival
LIANA ISSAKADZE

სამხატვრო ხელმძღვანელი
გიორგი ისაკაძე
Artistic Director
GIORGI ISSAKADZE

ფესტივალის საბავშვ ორკესტრი
"სამართაველს ვერბო ნება"
Festival Base Orchestra
"GEORGIAN VIRTUOSI"

ღამის სერენადები / NIGHT SERENADES

ბათუმი BATUMI
AUGUST 25 **საპროგრამო** 20:30
AUGUST 26 **საპროგრამო** 20:00

ილია ჩაუჩავაძის სახელობის დრამატული თეატრი
ILIA CHAVCHAVADZE STATE DRAMA THEATRE

თბილისი TBILISI
SEPTEMBER 17, 18
საპროგრამო 20:00

ს. სარაიშვილის სახელობის კონსერვატორიის დიდი დარბაზი
V. SARAJISHVILI STATE CONSERVATOIRE GRAND HALL

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