

Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili Delivers Speech at ITB Berlin 2023

By Liza Mchedlidze

The Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Gharibashvili, delivered a speech at the opening ceremony of the tourism exhibition ITB Berlin 2023.

According to the Prime Minister, the efforts of every Georgian are directed towards joining the European Union and the country deserves it for its history and culture.

As Irakli Gharibashvili noted, the Council of the European Union recognized the European perspective of Georgia and Georgia is closer to its 'civilizational choice' than ever.

"Today's government and people of Georgia are doing everything to achieve our goal. Today, when the Council of the European Union recognized Georgia's European perspective, we are closer to our civilizational choice than ever; Now the efforts of every Georgian are directed towards the day when Georgia will finally occupy the place on the map of Europe, which we deserve with our history and culture, our past and modernity; The day when we will proudly say with you - we are hosts in Europe. Once again, I would like to thank the German government, the vice chancellor, the city mayor, the organizers for inviting us here, I want to emphasize that our bilateral relations have had an unprecedented dynamic over the past year, which is clearly confirmed by our hosting of this event today," Gharibashvili stated.



Gharibashvili also spoke about the Russian occupation and said that although 20 percent of Georgia is occupied by Russia and faces many challenges, Georgia is one of the safest countries in Europe.

According to the Prime Minister, Georgians are supported by a rich and unique history and culture while striving to be-

come a member of the family of free European nations.

"Ladies and gentlemen, invited guests, I would like to thank you on behalf of our country for coming and tell you: as we strive to become a member of the family of free European nations, we have a rich and unique history and culture behind us. Although today 20 percent of our coun-

try is occupied by Russia and faces many challenges, Georgia is one of the safest countries in Europe, which is very important for any visitor to our country. And today Georgia's economy is one of the fastest growing in the world, despite all the challenges, the devastating war in Ukraine, the unjustified war on the part of Russia," said the Prime Minister.

Helsinki Commission Leadership Issues Statement on 'Foreign Agent' Bill

By Liza Mchedlidze

The US Helsinki Commission issued a statement regarding the 'Foreign Agent' bill initiated in the Parliament of Georgia, expressing great concern that this law is an attack on the

strategic partnership and the Western choice of the Georgian people.

The commission said that if the draft law is adopted, it will emphasize the rapid decline of Georgian democracy.

The Helsinki Commission

calls the bill initiated by the deputies who formally left the Georgian dream anti-democratic.

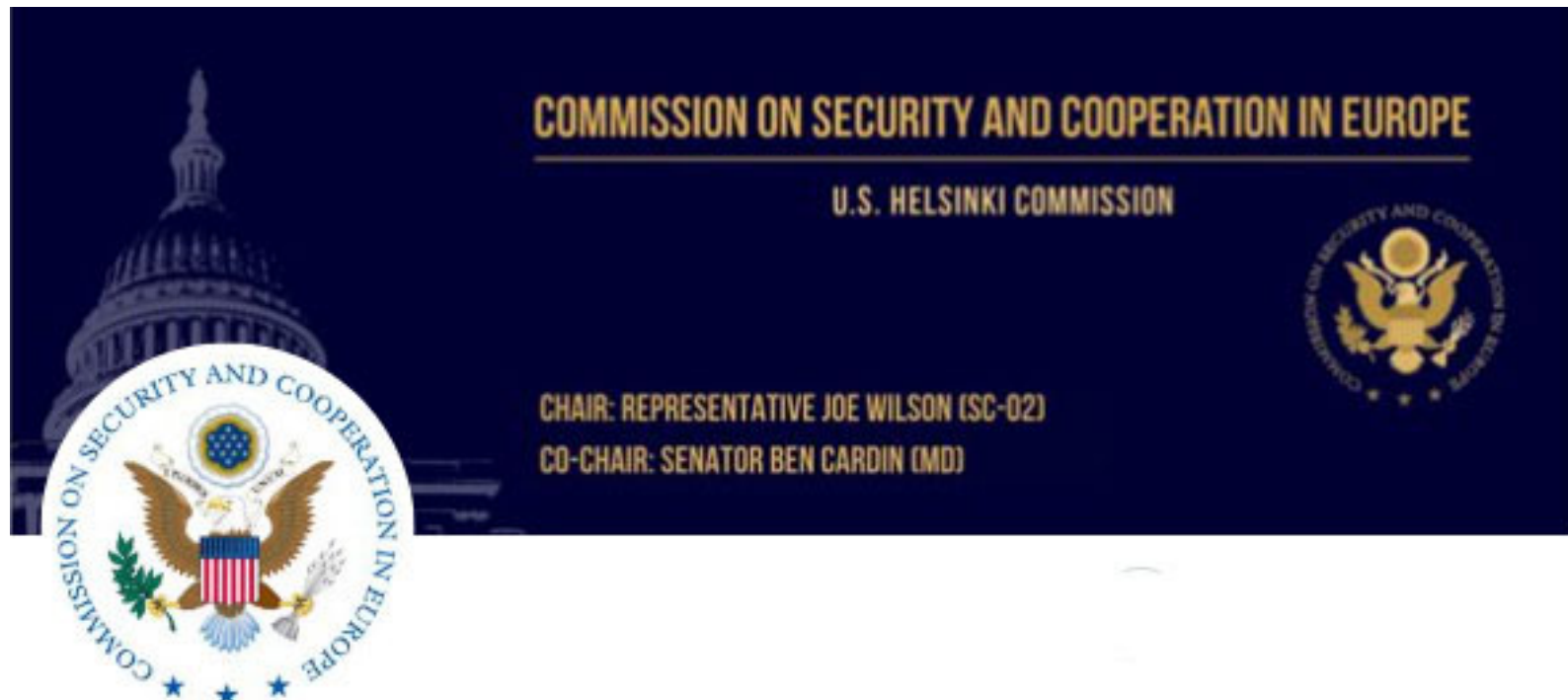
"WASHINGTON—In response to news that the Georgian parliament is considering Russian-style foreign agent legisla-

tion, which would have a chilling effect on Georgia's vibrant civil society, Helsinki Commission Chairman Representative Joe Wilson (SC-2), Co-Chairman Senator Ben Cardin (MD), Ranking Member Representative Steve Cohen (TN-09), and Rank-

ing Member Senator Roger Wicker (MS) issued the following joint statement:

Since regaining independence, the Georgian people have clearly and consistently chosen to be part of the democratic, Euro-Atlantic community. However, the antidemocratic, Russian-style foreign agent law would be, if enacted, a rebuke to the Georgian people's EU and NATO aspirations and underscore the rapid decline of Georgian democracy. It would also demonstrate the present government's increasing embrace of Russia—the same country that occupies 20 percent of Georgian territory, kidnaps its citizens, disregards its sovereignty, and wages a genocidal war against Ukraine.

"This bill as well as the ongoing democratic decline, including the jailing of political opponents, is an attack on our strategic partnership and the Georgian people's Western choice. Since 1991, the United States has been a firm and untiring friend to the Georgian people. This will not change, regardless of the government's position. In the spirit of that friendship, we call on the Georgian government to reject the proposed legislation and renew its commitment to democracy," the statement reads.



The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Legal Affairs Committee of Parliament of Georgia Supports the 'Foreign Influence Agents' Bill at First Hearing



The Legal Affairs Committee of the Parliament of Georgia supported the first hearing of the bills "On Transparency of Foreign Influence" and "On Registration of Foreign Agents" initiated by People's Power.

"Here there is no talk of referring to individuals as agents, and in no case talk with something stigmatizing and in a negative context. No specific person is referred to, as if the specific person were an agent. This does not happen. Regarding the terminology, other issues, we will have a discussion on these issues within

the second hearing and only on the principle that it is important for us to ensure transparency, that awareness is an important component in a democratic society, with these principles we propose to support both bills.

Also, both draft laws should be sent to

the Venice Commission and in accordance with the recommendations issued by the Venice Commission, which should be consistent with the Constitution of Georgia, we should discuss further issues. Both projects were unanimously supported by those present at the committee," said MP Anri Okhanashvili.

Simultaneously with the consideration of the draft laws, the protest took place outside the parliament where the opposition MPs along with civilians protested the 'Foreign Influence Agents' law. Before the start of the hearing, a physical

fight broke out in the meeting hall, later the opposition MPs were dismissed from the committee room by force.

2008 War in Georgia was a sign Putin is a tyrant, Vice-Chancellor of Germany Robert Habeck says



The Vice-Chancellor of Germany, Minister of Economy and Climate Protection, Robert Habeck at the opening ceremony of ITB Berlin said that Georgia wants to move towards Europe and that Europe is waiting for Georgia.

In his speech, the German Vice-Chancellor talked about the events of 2008 and said that Georgia also suffered from Russia which Ukraine is now facing.

"I remember when I traveled to Georgia, I will say more about it later, but you know what I remember, I think it was during the Covid period, I was in Georgia, I remembered the events of 2008. I know that Georgia also experienced what Ukraine is facing now from Russia. I was in your country four years ago. I thought it was a very distant past, but

the same aggression has returned to the world. We must understand these events. "When we think about everything that Russia did in Georgia in 2008, it was probably a sign that showed that the Russian leader Putin has become a tyrant, and we all see that the current problems that are happening in Ukraine started in Georgia from the Russian side," stated Habeck.

The women-led non-governmental organisation 'Hands for Peace' hosted a gala exhibition in Zugdidi to present the results of a 'Handicraft for Social Change' project, supported by the EU and UNDP through the EU4Dialogue initiative.

The EU and UNDP's support allowed 40 conflict-affected women to join training programmes in tailoring, embroidery, knitting and macramé to develop professional careers, earn a living, improve livelihoods and increase self-reliance. Six of the trained participants have already found jobs in different local enterprises and one of the beneficiaries was successful in applying for a grant programme.

EU4Dialogue in Georgia: 'Hands for Peace' project presents its results in Zugdidi



In addition to handicraft training, 'Hands for Peace' helped women master marketing, sales and social media, as well as learning how to write business proposals and applying for grants.

Aiming to build social cohesion in a conflict-affected society, the project brought together internally displaced people and their host communities. Out of 40 training participants, 15 were displaced from the Abkhazia region and 25 were the residents of the Khobi, Tsalenjikha and Zugdidi municipalities.

EU4Dialogue: Support to Conflict Transformation in the South Caucasus and the Republic of Moldova is a joint initiative of the EU and UNDP that aims to improve socio-economic conditions for people, build livelihoods, promote gender equality and youth engagement and support the peaceful transformation of conflict.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Tuesday, March 7

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 13°C

Night Clear
Low: 4°C

Wednesday, March 8

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 12°C

Night Mostly Cloudy
Low: 4°C

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