

Georgia Presents Report to European Union on Progress Towards Membership Candidacy Status



BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Ilia Darchiashvili, handed over a report prepared for the European Commission to the Ambassador of the European Union in Georgia, Pawel Herczynski.

The report was prepared in accordance with the Copenhagen Criteria as part of

the enlargement package. It consists of 35 chapters that describe the legislative, institutional, and other activities carried out by Georgia over the past year to approach the European Union and the progress achieved in this regard.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the report's preparation began at the end of February upon the European Commission's request, and the process

was coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. All state agencies, legislative bodies, and judicial authorities were involved in the process.

The European Commission will evaluate the report based on the so-called Copenhagen Criteria, which includes political, economic, and sectoral aspects. The evaluation report is expected to be published in the fall of 2023. Based on

this report, the European Council will discuss granting Georgia the status of a candidate country by the end of 2023.

The mentioned document is a part of the important work carried out by the Georgian government in the direction of European integration, which will be a very important support mechanism for the European Commission to make a relevant conclusion in October, and the European Council to make a positive decision by the end of the year and grant Georgia the status of a candidate, - the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia said. Ilia Darchiashvili said this after the meeting with the EU ambassador, during which the head of the foreign ministry handed over the first report prepared within the framework of the expansion package to Pawel Herczynski.

According to Darchiashvili, the document reflects the steps taken and reforms carried out by the Georgian authorities since May 2022 and will be an essential part of the discussions within the European Commission.

"I personally presented this document to the EU Ambassador. We had a very interesting meeting during which we discussed all the important steps that Georgia has taken and which are planned in order to fulfill the 12 points of the European Commission within the promised time frame and with the logic included in the recommendations. We also discussed future activities. The most important thing is that the document we shared with the ambassador today and sent to Brussels simultaneously will play a vital role in the decision-making process of the European Commission," said Darchiashvili.

US Ambassador Kelly Degnan Says US 'Convinced' of Sanctioned Judges Corrupt Activities

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

US Ambassador to Georgia Kelly Degnan stated to reporters that the creation of a temporary investigative commission on the court presents an opportunity for the Georgian authorities to look into long-standing allegations of corruption within the court system.

According to Degnan, "protecting four individuals who have credible information about their involvement in corrupt activities is not showing solidarity with the professional judges."

"As we have said many times, this is an opportunity for the Georgian authorities to investigate allegations of corruption in the judicial system, which has been widely known for years. I want to make it very clear, since so many people have made statements as if we are not well informed - there is no room for error.

The United States is absolutely convinced that the basis for sanctioning these four individuals is their involvement in corrupt activities.

We did a very thorough review, gathering information, much of which is publicly available, before we put it into the system that goes to the Secretary of State.

Secretary of State Blinken approved these restrictions because we were absolutely convinced of the basis for it. As I said earlier, this is an opportunity for the Georgian authorities to investigate these allegations themselves in accordance with Georgian law, based on the same publicly available information and other information," said Kelly Degnan.

Kelly Degnan highlighted that many Georgian judges have participated in successful exchange programs and expressed her hope that the government will use this chance to investigate the allegations



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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.5170; Euro - 2.7536; GBP - 3.1284; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.0805; Swiss Franc - 2.7982

US Ambassador Kelly Dignan Says US 'Convinced' of Sanctioned Judges Corrupt Activities

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of corruption, rather than defending individuals with credible information about their involvement in such practices. She also noted that it is important to express solidarity with professional judges who strive to work according to the law. "We have successful and popular exchange programs in which many Georgian judges have participated. It seems

strange to express solidarity with Georgian judges, who are mostly very professional and want to work according to the law.

Defending four people who have credible information about their involvement in corrupt practices is not a display of solidarity with professional judges. I hope the government will use this opportunity to investigate the allegations," stated Dignan.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Parliament of Georgia Fails to Reach Quorum for Vote on Investigative Commission for Sanctioned Judge Again



The quorum required to begin the voting process at a plenary session of the Parliament of Georgia was not met once again,

as the parliamentary majority did not register before voting, leaving only 52 deputies registered. As a result, the voting process failed and the initiative to create a temporary investigative commission regarding US sanctioned judges could not be voted on.

During the session, the chairman of Georgian Dream Irakli Kobakhidze reiterated his support for the judges and stated

that the members of the majority did not intend to undergo registration in order to support the independence of the court.

"Colleagues, we once again declare our support for the independence of the court and solidarity with Georgian judges. Therefore, even today, the parliamentary majority will not pass the registration," Kobakhidze noted.

Anri Okhanashvili: "German Ambassador expresses maximum support for Georgia's European integration"

Chairman of the Legal Affairs Committee Anri Okhanashvili had a meeting with Ernst Peter Fischer, the Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Georgia, where they discussed several topics, including the implementation of the 12-point

plan established by the European Union.

In a statement after the meeting, Okhanashvili mentioned that they regularly exchange information on specific issues and that the Ambassador ex-



pressed both his personal and the Federal Republic of Germany's full support for Georgia's European integration. He added, "Therefore, one of the topics of our discussion was re-

lated to the completed points of the 12-point plan, as well as some remaining issues, which are practically at the last stage of implementation."

Overall, the meeting was an opportunity for the Chairman

and the Ambassador to discuss matters of mutual interest and to further strengthen the relationship between Georgia and the Federal Republic of Germany.

Conflict in Georgia: Secretary General's Consolidated Report says little progress in human rights and humanitarian situation in conflict-affected areas

Strasbourg, 19.04.2023 – Serious concerns persist regarding the human rights situation in the areas affected by the armed conflict between the Russian Federation and Georgia in August 2008, according to a report by Secretary General Marija Pejcinovic Buric presented to the Committee of Ministers and published today.

The bi-annual report (covering the period November 2022–March 2023) on the conflict in Georgia highlighted that core issues concerning the human rights and humanitarian situa-

tion in the conflict-affected areas continue to see little progress. Various restrictions on freedom of movement and access to education and healthcare remain of serious concern, including in terms of their impact on vulnerable groups.

Against the continuous impediments by the Russian Federation to peaceful conflict resolution, security, and stability in the wider region, the Secretary General welcomed Georgia's continuous efforts and initiatives aimed at promoting dialogue and reconciliation, and their provision of free access to health care, education, and other social benefits for all residents of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as their efforts to address the needs of internally displaced persons.

During the period under review, operational activities on Confidence-Building Measures were continued. The report, for instance, notes that archive specialists from both sides of the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) continued to work in online format and met in person, for the first time since the Covid-19 public health crisis. Efforts have been initiated to facilitate dialogue between psychologists specialised in war traumas and on the prevention of gender-based violence on both sides of the ABL. The development of further initiatives continues in close co-ordination with the Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality.

Secretary General stressed that continuing her periodic re-

porting to the Committee of Ministers on the conflict in Georgia will remain a high priority.

Note for Editors

Consolidated reports on the conflict in Georgia have been prepared by the Secretary General since 2010, following a Committee of Ministers decision. The current report is based, inter alia, on the results of the fact-finding visit to Tbilisi on 13-14 February 2023. The delegation also had the possibility to observe the situation at the Administrative Boundary Line.

Conflict in Georgia: Secretary General's Consolidated Report says little progress in human rights and humanitarian situation in conflict-affected areas

The current Consolidated report examines, inter alia, the

implementation of the European Court's judgments in the two inter-state cases "Georgia v. Russia (II)", concerning the armed conflict between Georgia and the Russian Federation in 2008 and its consequences, and "Georgia v. Russia (I)" concerning arrests, detentions and expulsions from the Russian Federation of Georgian nationals in 2006-2007.

On 20 April, the European Court of Human Rights is due to deliver a ruling on the inter-state application "Georgia v. Russia (IV)", lodged by the Government of Georgia in August 2018, which concerns the alleged deterioration of the human rights situation along the administrative boundary lines between Georgian-controlled territory and Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Weather

Thursday, April 20

Day Mostly Cloudy

High: 23°C

Night Showers

Low: 12°C

Friday, April 21

Day Showers

High: 16°C

Night Mostly Cloudy

Low: 8°C

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