

## US Sanctions Coordinator Jim O'Brien Reports Increase in Transit of Electronic Items through Georgia to Russia

By Liza Mchedlidze

Head of the US Office of Sanctions Coordination, Jim O'Brien, spoke about the increase in the transit of electronic goods through Georgia to Russia in an interview with Voice of America.

According to O'Brien, electronic items enter Russia through third countries, and Georgia is one of the transit points. He highlighted that the transit of critical electronics through Georgia to Russia is a clear violation of the UN Charter and the basis for sanctions and export controls.

O'Brien noted that this kind of trade might look like a good business opportunity to someone in these countries, but they should know by now that it violates sanctions and could potentially contribute to the conflict in the region. He urged all involved parties to be very careful and avoid this kind of trade.

In response to the journalist's question on whether Georgia is knowingly or unknowingly supporting Russia and helping them obtain sensitive electronics, O'Brien clarified that Georgia complies with financial sanctions but the country has seen a rise in the transit of electronic goods to Russia. He further explained that this trade was legal until the end of the year when the



European Union and G7 members imposed restrictions on these goods.

O'Brien expressed his hope that the businesses involved in this kind of trading will realize that it worked at one point, but it's over now, and it needs to stop. He expects the transit data

to decrease quickly. The US sanctions coordinator's statements indicate that the US government is closely monitoring the situation and urging businesses to comply with the restrictions imposed by the EU and G7 members:

"I would say that in terms of

financial sanctions, Georgia fulfills the sanctions very diligently. However, we have seen an increase in the transit of electronic goods from Georgia to Russia. As I mentioned at the beginning, much of this trade was legal until the end of the year, when the European Union and G7 mem-

bers imposed restrictions on these goods. We expect this transit data to decrease very quickly. I hope that the businesses that have been involved in this kind of trading will realize that it worked at one point in time, which is now over, and that it needs to stop now," O'Brien stated.

## The Ministry of Defense of Georgia Responds to Reports on Non-Participation in Defender 2023

By Liza Mchedlidze



The Ministry of Defense of Georgia has released a statement in response to reports about the country's non-participation in the multinational exercise Defender 2023 organized by the US European Command. According to the Ministry, the reports are biased and represent another provocation towards the Defense Forces.

The Ministry of Defense clarified that Georgia's decision not to participate in the exercise was based on its strategic goals and objectives. The Defense Forces have decided to focus more on international and local exercises that prioritize combat readiness, interoperability with NATO member and partner countries, sharing experience, and improving professional skills.

The Ministry emphasized that the Defense Forces are constantly engaged in hosting and

CONTINUED FROM Page 2



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Ministry of Defence of Georgia

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.4911; Euro - 2.7295; GBP - 3.1054; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.1170; Swiss Franc - 2.7719

# The Ministry of Defense of Georgia Responds to Reports on Non-Participation in Defender 2023

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

participating in international exercises aimed at increasing their combat capabilities. The Ministry's statement aims to counter the false information being spread by certain media outlets and individuals with a political agenda.

Georgia and the United

States have a long-standing strategic partnership, and the Defense Forces of both countries have cooperated closely in the past. While Georgia will not be participating in Defender 2023, it will continue to work with the US military and other NATO members and partners to enhance regional security and stability.

"The Ministry of Defense of Georgia responds to the information spread by certain media outlets and individuals with a political agenda about the participation of the Georgian Defense Forces in the multinational exercise Defender 2023 organized by the US European Command. Unfortunately, the mentioned biased information

represents another provocation towards the Ministry of Defense.

Regarding the direct participation of Georgia in the exercise 'Defender 2023', we would like to remind you that based on the goals and objectives of the defense forces, through active communication with our main strategic partner and their recommendation, it was decided to di-

rect more efforts and resources to such international and local exercises that they take more into account the tasks mentioned above, including increasing combat readiness, increasing interoperability with NATO member and partner countries, sharing experience and improving professional skills," the agency said.

## The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

### Chairman of Georgia's Foreign Relations Committee Meets with UK Ambassador to Georgia

The press service of the Parliament of Georgia has announced that Nikoloz Samkharadze, who serves as the Chairman of the Parliament's Foreign Relations Committee, has held a meeting with Mark Clayton, the Ambassador of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to Georgia.

During the meeting, the parties discussed the current state of bilateral relations between their respective countries and explored opportunities to further strengthen these ties at the par-

liamentary level. Additionally, they highlighted the upcoming visit of a delegation from the Georgian Parliament to Great Britain as significant.

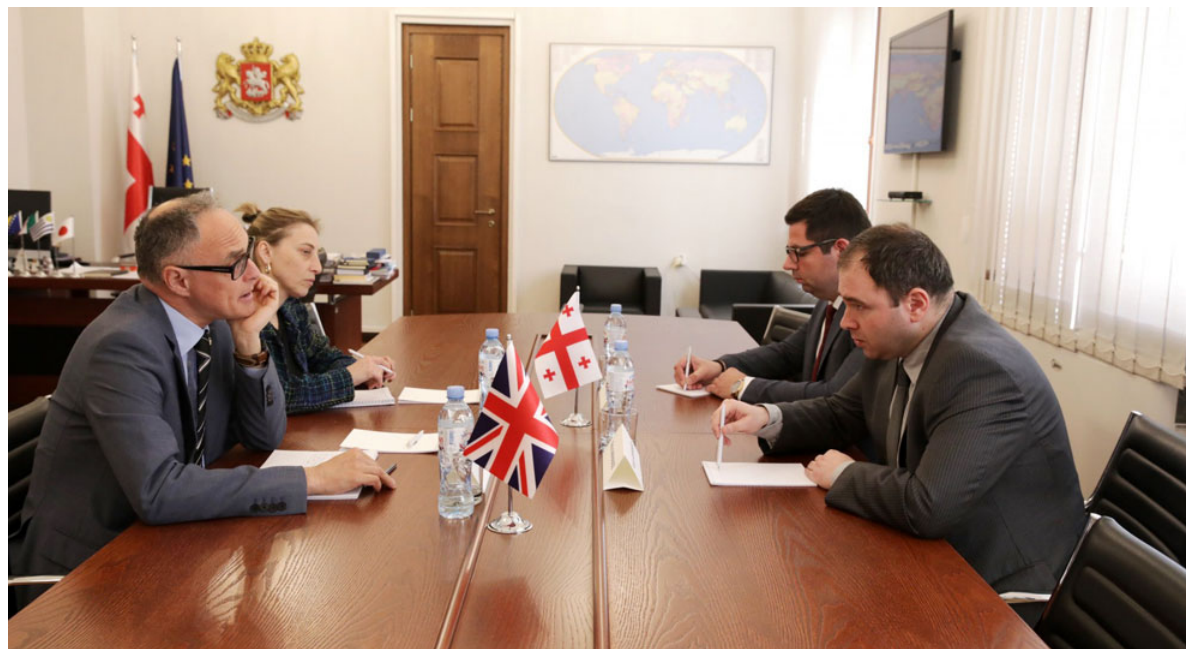
Samkharadze discussed Georgia's aspirations towards European and Euro-Atlantic integration with the ambassador, and also shared details about the

progress made and reforms implemented towards achieving these goals.

In addition, the Ambassador of the United Kingdom of Great

Britain and Northern Ireland to Georgia, Mark Clayton, and Nikoloz Samkharadze, the Chairman of the Parliament's Foreign Relations Committee, engaged in a conversation regarding regional security concerns, including the ongoing Russian aggression in Ukraine and its potential impact on the security of Georgia and Europe. They also underscored the peaceful role played by Georgia in the ongoing conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

"We had an interesting meeting with the ambassador of our strategic partner country, Great Britain. At the meeting, we discussed regional and global security issues, Georgia's European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations, and steps taken. We talked about the upcoming NATO summit and the expectations of the Georgian government in this direction," said Samkharadze.



# Human Rights Talks kicks off with an engaging opening event

EU and UNDP support public discussions about human rights in Georgia



Funded by the European Union



## Weather

Wednesday, May 3

Day Light Rain  
High: 12°C

Night Mostly Cloudy  
Low: 6°C

Thursday, May 4

Day Partly Cloudy  
High: 21°C

Night Clear  
Low: 9°C

students, and members of civil society and the public to exchange ideas on various aspects of human rights.

The opening event, titled "Human Rights, a Cornerstone of Democracy", featured a keynote speech by **Levan Berdzenishvili**, a renowned Georgian scholar, philosopher and former politician, followed by a Q&A session. The speaker emphasized the crucial role of human rights in shaping a democratic society and stressed the need for continued efforts to respect, protect and promote human rights in all areas of life.

In his welcome remarks to the event participants, **Nick Beresford**, UNDP Resident Representative in Georgia, said: "Protecting human rights is es-

sential for creating a world that is more equal and just. The Human Rights Talks will help advance this goal by bringing together diverse perspectives and expertise. We are proud to partner with the EU on this important initiative."

**Agata Nieboj**, Rule of Law, Security and Human Rights Team Leader at the European Union Delegation to Georgia, noted: "The European Union promotes awareness and understanding of human rights issues that lead to better-informed decisions and policies. The Human Rights Talks provides a forum for engaging people in constructive discussions on human rights, recognising the challenges, and developing solutions."

The Human Rights Talks se-

ries will continue throughout the year, covering a range of human rights issues, including gender equality, environmental justice, labour rights, and freedom of expression. The monthly events will be open to the public and will provide opportunities for engagement and dialogue with experts and policymakers.

###

Human Rights for All is a US\$3 million EU-funded initiative supporting Georgia to promote respect for human rights, strengthen human rights protection, and address the remaining issues of concern. Two UN agencies – UNDP and OHCHR are implementing this initiative in close collaboration with national partners and stakeholders.

**T**BILISI. 1 May 2023 – The Human Rights Talks series, aimed at exploring and promoting the importance of human rights in Georgia, kicked off with an engaging opening event on 28 April.

Initiated and organised by the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the Union of Tbilisi Museums – Ilia Chavchavadze Literary Memorial Museum, the discussion brought together experts, advocates, policymakers,

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