

Irakli Kobakhidze Calls for Removal of 'Deoligarchization' Term by the European Commission to Prompt Law Cancellation

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Irakli Kobakhidze, the chairman of Georgian Dream stated that the Venice Commission and the European Commission are in conflict with each other regarding the "deoligarchization law" because the Venice Commission favors a systematic approach, while the European Commission's recommendation implies a personal approach.

"There is a contradiction between the recommendations of the Venice Commission and the European Commission. If they reach an agreement, we will follow the guidance of the European Commission. However, currently, the Venice Commission advises one thing while the European Commission advises another.

The Venice Commission expresses its disapproval of the personalized approach and emphasizes the need for reforms in various areas, which are already being implemented.

On the other hand, the European Commission advocates for a personalized approach and emphasizes the concept of deoligarchization. The term itself implies a focus on individuals, as an oligarch refers to a person.

Once the European Commission aligns with the Venice Commission and removes the aspect of de-oligarchization from the 12



points, we will promptly revoke the law. We intend to pass this law through three readings be-

fore the end of this month," stated Kobakhidze. According to Kobakhidze, the

deadline for implementing the law will be extended until March 1. If the European Commission

aligns with the recommendation of the Venice Commission in December, the law will be revoked in February.

To additional questions about how the instructions of the Venice Commission and the European Commission contradict each other, when the European Commission says that the problem of deoligarchization should be solved, and the Venice Commission offers a way to solve this problem, Kobakhidze said that an oligarch is a person and deoligarchization means a personal approach:

"Oligarch is a person. Deoligarchization means the implementation of a specific person's de... something. Then they said, carry out reforms. The Venice Commission has written well what a systemic approach means. Then the European Commission should share the approach of the Venice Commission, remove the word deoligarchization, and say that reforms are needed. They have internal resistance, we want clarity.

[...] De-oligarchization means, for example, that Kezerashvili is an oligarch, de-Kezerashviliization should take place. The word deoligarchization is personalized, so we are saying something simple: if the European Commission itself does not support a personalized approach, it should be reflected in 12 points," he said.

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The Venice Commission has assessed the revised bill on de-oligarchization and expressed doubts regarding the effectiveness of the changes made to align it with the standards of the Council of Europe on human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. In their conclusion, the Commission stated that the amended draft law should not be approved by the parliament and emphasized the need to implement a "systemic approach" rather than a "personal approach."

The Venice Commission recommends that the draft law not be adopted and that the Georgian authorities develop corrective, additional laws and measures to combat oligarchic influence. These include:

- Implementation of effective competitive policies.
- Strengthening the fight against corruption at the highest level.

Venice Commission Rejects Bill 'On Deoligarchization'

- Ensuring transparency in public procurement.
- Enhancing the plural-

- ism of mass media and transparency of mass media owners.
- Refining anti-money

- laundering policies, including transparency of legal entities and entities.

- Strengthening existing control mechanisms and rules for financing political parties and election campaigns.

- Making changes in tax legislation to increase the independence and efficiency of the main regulatory and controlling bodies.

- The Venice Commission emphasizes the need for a judicial system reform aimed at achieving independence and impartiality, including the Supreme Council of Justice.

- "The Venice Commission emphasizes that the danger of concentrating significant influence over economic, political, and public life in the hands of a private individual may exist in any country. Most countries have developed and implemented interrelated legislative, administrative, economic, and other measures to prevent this concentration from having a destructive effect on democracy, the rule



Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.6057; Euro - 2.8136; GBP - 3.2748; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.1193; Swiss Franc - 2.8751

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

of law, sovereignty, and human rights. Instead of adopting this systemic approach, Georgia has opted for a 'personal approach' by preparing a law on de-oligarchization. This 'personal approach' aims to identify individuals as 'oligarchs' based on certain criteria such as wealth, ownership of mass media, etc.,

and imposes various restrictions. Although most of the restrictions have been removed in the revised version, the potential political misuse and application of provisions in this bill still pose a serious threat to the rule of law and political pluralism. We ac-

knowledge that there is no universal solution in the fight against oligarchic influence, and in exceptional, critical cases, such as during a government overthrow, radical decisions of a personal nature may be justified on a temporary and emergency

basis," the document states.

The Venice Commission believes that this "personal approach" should be seen as a supplement to a "systemic approach," not as an alternative.

"These measures must be developed in full compliance with

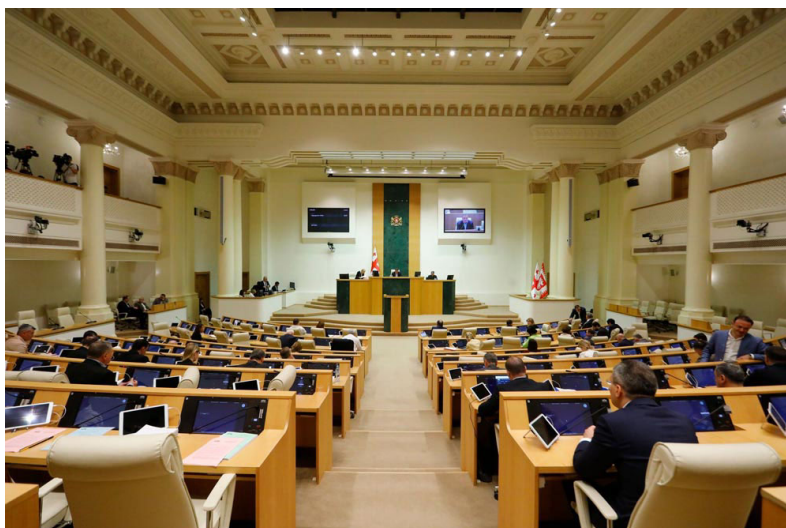
political pluralism and the rule of law, particularly with strong guarantees of the decision-making body's independence and due legal procedures. Currently, the draft law cannot be considered a democratic and effective response. Such de-oligarchization legislation can become a dangerous tool in the hands of political opponents of the government, leading to persecution," the conclusion reads.

Venice Commission Rejects Bill 'On Deoligarchization'

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Parliament Overcomes President's Veto on the Law 'On the National Bank' with 15 in Favor and 26 Against



In a parliamentary session, the veto imposed by the President on the law "On the National Bank" was overcome, with 15 members in favor and 26 mem-

bers against the veto. A total of 124 parliament members were present during the session. Initially, the draft law was voted on with motivated remarks by the President, but it did not receive sufficient support. Subsequently, the original version of the draft law was voted on and

vice-president is introduced to the board of the National Bank. The First Vice-President will assume the duties of the President of the National Bank in their absence.

On February 23, the President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili, vetoed the amendments to the law "On the National Bank."

UNM's Tina Bokuchava Urges Majority to Reject 'Deoligarchization' Bill

Tina Bokuchava, the chairperson of the "United National Movement" faction, expressed concern about the actions of the "Georgian Dream" party, stating that they are depriving the Georgian people of a European future. She highlighted that the anti-Western steps taken by Georgian Dream may hinder Georgia's chances of obtaining candidate status in the European Union.

Bokuchava also emphasized the significance of the Venice Commission's conclusion regard-

ing the de-oligarchization law. She described the conclusion as extremely serious, noting that the Venice Commission strongly advises against adopting the law. Bokuchava stated that the law fails to comply with European legislation, hinders the crucial process of de-oligarchization for Georgia's European integration,

"This conclusion is extremely serious. The Venice Commission strongly urges you not to adopt this law. The call is very simple and direct - you should not accept this law, because it cannot meet the European legislation, it cannot bring de-oligarchization, which is vital for the European integration of our



and undermines the fulfillment of the 12-point commitment. She further argued that the law poses a threat to the country's democracy and the rule of law.

country, it cannot be considered as the fulfillment of the 12 points and undermines the country's democracy and the rule of law," Bokuchava said.

Silk Road Tourism in Focus at CAREC Tourism Meeting

The CAREC Tourism Working Group Meeting and Capacity Building Workshop took place on June 12-13, 2023, in Tbilisi, Georgia. The event aimed to reinvigorate tourism in the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) region, focusing on the Silk Road and promoting regional cooperation.

Participants engaged in discussions about sustainable tourism development progress in the region. They explored new activities such as the indicator database, visa facilitation study,

ABEC safety/health protocols, and accommodation classification. The session fostered open

dialogue among participants from CAREC countries, allowing them to provide their views and

The event also included a discussion on the CAREC Tourism Web Portal, which showcased

Participants agreed on the scope of the program and shared their insights on climate change impacts on the CAREC tourism sector.



key features, country information, and tourist sites along the Silk Road. Participants had an opportunity to provide their feedback, suggest improvements, and discuss ways to manage and sustain the portal effectively.

Additionally, a Capacity Building Program for the public and private sectors was presented, aiming to enhance tourism exper-

CAREC is a partnership of 10 countries and aims to promote economic cooperation and development in the region by fostering five clusters: (i) economic and financial stability, (ii) trade tourism and economic corridors, (iii) infrastructure and economic connectivity, (iv) agriculture and water, (v) human development and crosscutting themes.

Established in 2001, CAREC program aims to create a seamless and integrated regional economy that benefits all member countries by enhancing connectivity, reducing trade barriers, and promoting sustainable development.

Weather

Wednesday, June 14

Day T-storm
High: 28°C

Night T-storm
Low: 18°C

Thursday, June 15

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 26°C

Night Mostly Cloudy
Low: 17°C

published by

The Messenger

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