

EU Ambassador Herczynski Commends Georgian People's Role in Shaping Modern History and Emphasizes Membership Benefits

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The European Union Ambassador to Georgia, H.E. Pawel Herczynski, conveyed a message to the gathered citizens at Freedom Square, celebrating Georgia's attainment of EU candidate status. He began by expressing his congratulations on the historic day when all 27 EU countries unanimously decided to grant candidate status to Georgia.

In his address, Herczynski extended his congratulations to various stakeholders, including political leaders, civil servants, civil society, and the media. However, he emphasized that the foremost congratulations were reserved for the people of Georgia, acknowledging their unwavering support for European integration.

"Congratulations, today is a historic day!

27 EU countries unanimously decided to grant the candidate status to Georgia.

Congratulations to political leaders, civil servants, civil society, and media.

But, first and foremost, congratulations to the people of Georgia, who devotedly support European integration.

The voice of the people of Georgia is clearly heard in the European Union. As I am hearing you now and here.

Today's decision is an appreciation of the efforts made by each and every one of you. It is definitely a big step forward, but the final goal is EU membership. Therefore, now is the time for political leaders to fulfill the will of the people and implement reforms quickly," Herczynski said.

The Ambassador urged political leaders to respond to the will of the people by



promptly implementing necessary reforms. Referencing Georgia's national motto, "strength is in unity," he emphasized the need for unity for the European future.

Herczynski expressed his belief that the Georgian people are shaping the modern history of the country and highlighted the benefits of EU membership, including peace, stability, and economic prosperity for current and future generations.

Additionally, he noted that Georgia's unique culture and traditions would contribute to the diversity of the European Union.

"Georgia's coat of arms reads: „strength is in unity". Today, my main message is exactly the same – now is the time to unite for the European future! You are all making Georgia's modern history.

The EU membership will bring peace, stability and economic prosperity for you,

your families and future generations. In turn, Georgia's unique culture and traditions will enrich the diversity of the European Union. Today is a very emotional day for me and my team. I am happy that we are celebrating this day together!

Once again, congratulations, Georgia, the beautiful, no one can find another one like you. Go forward, Georgia, Go forward!" Herczynski stated.

EU Decision Marks Crucial Historical Milestone in Georgia's Development, Says Vice Prime Minister

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The Minister of Economy and Vice Prime Minister of Georgia, Levan Davitashvili, participated in a ceremonial event at Freedom Square in Tbilisi to commemorate the European Union's granting of candidate status to Georgia.

Davitashvili congratulated the people of Georgia and the country on the European Union's historic decision to grant candidate status. He expressed the long-awaited return of Georgia to the European family and emphasized the unity of the entire nation around the significant goal of EU membership.

In his comments to the media, the Vice Prime Minister assessed the European Union's decision on December 14 and emphasized its significance for Georgia. According to the minister, this is not merely a political decision; it marks a crucial historical milestone and repre-

sents a new stage in the country's development.

"For us, being in Europe is a civilizational choice, and as such, it goes beyond economic and pragmatic goals. Today is truly a momentous day in the life of Georgia, a day of celebration for every Georgian. We are all emotional as Georgia officially attains the status of a candidate for EU membership.

This marks the start of a new stage for our country. We foresee the prospect of joining the European Union, having embarked on this path since 2014. Georgia fulfilled all its obligations under the Association Agreement, distinguishing itself among the Eastern Partnership member states. I am confident that Georgia will successfully complete the remaining journey and become a valued member of the European Union," Davitashvili said.

The Vice Prime Minister expressed gratitude to all individuals, particularly civil servants, for their significant contribution to obtaining candidate status. He specifically acknowledged their determination, hard work, and professionalism, emphasizing that without these qualities, the achieved result would not have been possible.



Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.6816; Euro - 2.9406; GBP - 3.4290; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.9895; Swiss Franc - 3.0958

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

Crisis Within United National Movement Prior to 2024 Elections

Before the upcoming 2024 parliamentary elections, the main opposition party the United National Movement is in a deep crisis. The party is divided between supporters of the old and new leadership, represented by Nika Melia and Levan Khabeishvili. Some believe that the crisis in the main opposition party will increase the chances of victory of the ruling Georgian Dream, while others believe that the emergence of a third political force is becoming more realistic, the idea of which was once again put forward by the Lelo party.

The opposition has been looking for a "victory formula" in Georgia for several elections. During the parliamentary elections of 2016 and 2020, the condition of victory for many was the unification around the largest opposition party "National Movement".

Others argued that the Georgian Dream would always defeat the UNM due to the fact that the number of people in the country who do not like the current government but even more so do not want the National Movement to return to power, is very large. Therefore, part of the opposition believed that it was necessary to form such an opposition political force, which would be neither associated with the National Movement nor with the Georgian Dream. Before the parliamentary elections of 2024, this

topic is relevant again, but unlike before, the National Movement faces the upcoming elections as being in a deep crisis and less attractive to other parties.

The UNM is the party founded by Mikheil Saakashvili, and the party's supporters vote for it precisely because of Saakashvili. Today, he is a prisoner and cannot run the party anymore. One of the main tasks of the National Movement was to achieve the release of Saakashvili. It was for this reason that some of the party members, under the leadership of Levan Khabeishvili, opposed the party chairman Nika Melia and managed to depose him, and his supporters were also removed from the ruling team of the party. Nika Melia and his supporters claimed that Kezerashvili and Merabishvili are "in the shadows" behind Khabeishvili. As they say, Kezerashvili's strength is his finances, which play a major role in politics. Publicising this fact was damaging for the National Movement, since the question arises on how should the opposition party fight against Ivanishvili's shadow rule, if it is itself under shadow rule. Many expected that Nika Melia would leave the "National Movement" and create a separate party after his dismissal. They tried to de-

termine if it would be another party with 1% support or if the party created by him would manage to overcome the 5% barrier. Melia did not take this step, and as it turned out, he did the right thing and created a serious problem for Khabeishvili and his team.

Saakashvili considered the 11-point unity manifesto on November 23, the 20th anniversary of the Rose Revolution as a way to overcome the crisis in the party. All party members had to sign this document. This would prove not only the readiness to fight against Georgian Dream, but also to get used to the existing leadership team of the party. In fact, the manifesto did not overcome, but deepened the crisis.

Nika Melia and some of his supporters did not sign the manifesto. On November 26, Levan Khabeishvili also announced live on Formula TV station that Nika Melia was no longer a member of the National Movement. This action of his caused indignation among the members of the party and Khabeishvili was actually forced to announce the expansion of the governing body of the party - the political council.

However, many people are not satisfied with such a change, and

the way out is his resignation from the leadership of the party and the creation of a "consent committee" to manage the party.

There was also a version that the head of the "National Movement" would be Nika Gvaramia, the former manager of the TV company "Mtavari Aharki", who plans to enter politics after his release from prison. It might indeed be a good solution for the party in crisis, but Gvaramia categorically denied it.

The crisis in the National Movement continues and, naturally, this affects its rating as well. Obviously, the party will not weaken so much that it cannot cross the 5% threshold, but if the UNM cannot overcome the crisis, it is clear that it will not be able to conduct a successful election campaign, and the question is whether it will retain the name of the main opposition party.

The crisis in the National Movement reduces the attractiveness of this party to other smaller parties and increases the possibility of creating an alternative opposition coalition. It was at this time that the Lelo party came out with a call to unify the opposition and "gather in the middle."

This is the reversal of Bidzina

Ivanishvili's famous formula. Back in 2011, when Ivanishvili entered politics, he came out with the slogan that claimed that the middle should be removed, that is, the political spectrum in the country should become polarised, leaving the National Movement on one side and the Georgian Dream on the other.

Ivanishvili succeeded in this. After three elections, the Georgian Dream declares all opposition forces as "nationals," implying their associations with the UNM party. The initiative of uniting the opposition parties was announced once again, but these parties are not rushing to take steps in this direction yet. Some still hope to lower the 5% electoral threshold. According to them, if the opposition starts mass protests demanding the reduction of the threshold, it will be able to achieve success and the Georgian Dream will reduce the threshold to 2%. If this happens, according to public opinion polls, the opposition will collect more votes than the Georgian Dream and from 2024 the government will be in the hands of a coalition government of pro-Western opposition forces.

However, lowering the barrier should be ruled out since the Georgian Dream will not go for it, and it is better for the opposition to think about unification. Given the complex relationships between them, creating a union or unions will not be an easy task.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

German Bundesrat Acknowledges Georgia and Moldova as Safe Countries



The German Bundesrat has acknowledged Georgia and Moldova as safe countries. This

allows the government to speed up and simplify the handling of asylum applications from citizens of these countries and to more rapidly deport those whose asylum requests are rejected.

The relevant decision was made by the Bundesrat on De-

cember 15. Prior to this, in November, the draft law had been approved by the Bundestag, the lower house of the German legislature. It will come into effect after receiving the President's signature.

The Minister of Internal Affairs of Germany, Nancy Faeser, stated that both Georgia and Moldova aspire to join the Euro-

pean Union, and assured that citizens of these countries are not subjected to political persecution.

In addition, the Minister of the Interior of Germany emphasized that one in every ten asylum seekers comes to Germany from Georgia and Moldova. Recognizing them as safe countries of origin will enable the country to swiftly and effectively reduce the scale of illegal migration. The Minister noted that citizens of Georgia and Moldova constitute 10% of the total number of rejected asylum applications.

Chairman of Georgian Foreign Relations Committee Nikoloz Samkharadze Meets Finnish Ambassador Kirsti Narinen

The Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Parliament of Georgia, Nikoloz Samkharadze, met with the Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

Ambassador of the Republic of Finland to Georgia, Kirsti Narinen.



The Ambassador of Finland congratulated Samkharadze on Georgia attaining candidate status and expressed full support for the country's European integration.

According to their reports, the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee briefed the ambassador on the plans for 2024 and the intended steps to fulfill the nine recommendations

of the European Commission. "The parties discussed the existing relations between Fin-

land and Georgia, aiming to strengthen parliamentary ties and enhance reciprocal visits. During the meeting, they addressed regional security issues, including the ongoing Russian aggression in Ukraine and the situation in the South Caucasus region, highlighting the crucial role of Georgia in this context," read the information provided by the parliament's press office.

Weather

Monday, December 18

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 5°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: -3°C

Tuesday, December 19

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 6°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: -2°C

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therefore, the opinions expressed in some articles do not necessarily coincide with those of the newspaper. We take no responsibility for any claims made in advertisements.

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On December 15th, at the Embassy of the Republic of Turkey, Ambassador of Turkey to Georgia H.E. Ali Kaan Orbay, along with Mr. Osman Chalishkan-Mzhavanadze, Chairman of the Turkiye-Georgia Business Council (DEIK), presented a new camera to our correspondent, Khatuna Gogichaishvili.

The Messenger extends heartfelt gratitude for this generous gesture and anticipates to capture even more delightful and historical moments for the pages of our newspaper.



On the occasion of presenting the Mihály Zichy Award (named after the famous Hungarian Illustrator of the Georgian epic poem “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin”) to a Georgian contemporary artist Ramaz Razmadze, the Ambassador of Hungary H.E. Anna Mária Sikó held the award presenting ceremony on December 15.





