



BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The Economic Council meeting was conducted under the leadership of Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Gharibashvili.

According to information released by the press service of the Georgian government administration, the meeting discussed the urban development concepts for selected locations within the new state program for city and resort development. The program, initiated by the Prime Minister's decision, began in 2023. At the initial stage, ten locations were chosen: Borjomi, Bakuriani, Kutaisi, Tskaltubo, Telavi, Zugdidi, Batumi, Mtskheta, Mestia, and Kazbegi. Based on the formulated concepts, preparatory and construction activities will gradually commence in nine municipalities, with a planned tender for the Bakuriani area.

As per the released statement, one billion

## Session of the Economic Council Held Under the Leadership of Irakli Gharibashvili



GEL has been allocated from the state budget for the 5-year program and the new state program aims to foster both tourism development and job creation.

Irakli Gharibashvili received updates on current and planned activities for the 2024 population census. Emphasizing the significance of the issue, it was highlighted that the event will be conducted in accordance with international recommendations.

The Economic Council also discussed the development plan for Gonio. According to the presented concept, significant investments will be made for the sustainable development of the area, encompassing hotel and residential complexes, shopping centers, recreational and sports infrastructure, along with the preservation of wetland landscapes. The implementation of the project is anticipated to generate tens of thousands of jobs.



Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.6878; Euro - 2.9614; GBP - 3.4183; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.9290; Swiss Franc - 3.1480

# Georgian Delegation Meets Diaspora Expert Kingsley Thomas Aikins During Ireland Visit



By Liza Mchedlidze

The press service of the Parliament has released information that, as part of their working visit to the Republic of

Ireland, members of the Georgian delegation held a meeting with Professor Kingsley Thomas Aikins — an international expert in diaspora issues and a representative of the scientific

diaspora organization Diaspora Matters.

Beka Odisharia, Chairperson of the Diaspora and Caucasus Affairs Committee, expressed gratitude to Kingsley Thomas Aikins

for his active cooperation in addressing diaspora issues and for the recommendations provided.

“On my initiative, I invited you to the committee meeting in December 2022. Based on your suggestions, we have conducted numerous in-depth studies on diaspora and migration processes. Following your recommendation, and with the assistance of ICMCPD, we conducted a significant thematic study in 2023 on diaspora engagement and sustainable diaspora capital raising, authored by Professor Martin Russell. I would also like to express my gratitude to our foreign partners and international experts in diaspora issues, whose advice and recommendations are invaluable for the implementation of diaspora policy,” said Beka Odisharia.

Kingsley Thomas Aikins shared his experience with the members of the delegation and expressed his willingness to assist the Georgian authorities in establishing more effective relations with the diaspora and ac-

tively involving them in the construction of the state. According to Aikins, Georgia has significant potential as many successful Georgians are working in various parts of the world.

The members of the Georgian delegation emphasized that the state views the diaspora as an opportunity with the greatest potential and must be actively involved in the country’s reconstruction. There was a significant emphasis on leveraging the knowledge and capabilities of the diaspora to attract investments and promote economic empowerment in the country.

At the conclusion of the meeting, members of the Diaspora and Caucasus Affairs Committee expressed gratitude to Kingsley Thomas Aikins and affirmed their commitment to future cooperation.

Beka Odisharia extended an invitation to Professor Kingsley Thomas Aikins to participate in the Great Diaspora Economic Forum, scheduled to be held in Tbilisi in May of next year.

## The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

### Protesters Rally in Tbilisi Demanding Free School Meals



On December 23, a protest march took place in Tbilisi, where participants demanded

free school meals in Georgia. Named the “March against Hunger,” the demonstration commenced at The First Classical Gymnasium on Rustaveli Avenue and concluded at the Ministry of Education. The Voice

movement organized the protest, advocating for free school meals since 2021. They aspire to gather 25,000 signatures to bring this issue to the forefront of discussion.

“This march is just the beginning; our meeting today marks the start of our journey to all Georgian cities, with your help

and alongside you. We aim to collect 25,000 signatures, and for this, we will travel across the entire country with your support. Our goal is to keep this issue on the agenda and make it a topic of discussion wherever it is needed.

Are we naive to believe that free school meals will commence in all Georgian schools by September? Our goal is to initiate and ensure the irreversibility of this process starting in September. We seek your support wherever you are—stand by this cause wherever you can. Together, let’s see it through to the end and create a new, better life horizon,” said Giorgi Khasaia.

### Saakashvili Alleges Transfer Demand Aims to Silence His Communication

In response to the ‘For Georgia’ party’s request to transfer him from the clinic to the penitentiary, Georgia’s third president, Mikheil Saakashvili, denounced members of the former Prime Minister of Georgia, Giorgi Gakharia’s team as ‘deprived of humanity’ and wrote that 80% of his symptoms have not gone anywhere, and the government knows this very well.



The former president suggested that the underlying motive behind this request was to deprive him of the opportunity to communicate. Nevertheless, he noted that the administration will be obliged to bring him to court sessions from Rustavi prison, providing him with a platform where he can “speak even more freely.”

“The primary source of irritation for this creature is my regained ability to speak. They aim to transfer me to Rustavi prison precisely due to the significant chance of my condition worsening sharply, reverting to the state I was in a few months ago. This transfer poses a risk of extreme limitation of medical attention,” Saakashvili said.

## Weather

### Monday, December 25

Day Partly Cloudy High: 5°C

Night Cloudy Low: 2°C

### Tuesday, December 26

Day Partly Cloudy High: 12°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: 5°C

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