

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Invites OSCE/ODIHR Observers for 2024 Parliamentary Elections

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

On February 12, 2024, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia sent a letter to Matteo Mecacci, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), inviting observers to Georgia's upcoming 2024 parliamentary elections.

As mentioned in the letter from the Ministry, the government aims to conduct transparent, free, and fair elections, aligning with international standards and the best European democratic practices.

"Therefore, the Government of Georgia invites representatives from OSCE/ODIHR to observe the 2024 parliamentary elections in the country.

In the letter, it is emphasized that Georgia is ready to facilitate the effective performance of observers' duties.

February 2024 has been specified as the date for inviting observers in the government's plan to implement the recommendations of the European Commission," Foreign Ministry's statement reads.

A member of Parliament majority, Givi Mikanadze empha-



sized the Georgian government's commitment to transparency and fairness in the upcoming elections. He welcomed the inclusion of observation missions and stressed the use of new technologies, such as electronic voting machines, to enhance the integrity of the electoral process. Mikanadze also criticized opposition groups for potential sabotage attempts but expressed confidence in the security and protection of every citizen's vote.

"This once again demonstrates our willingness to open wide doors for observation missions. We welcome the arrival of missions and active participation in these processes. Unlike the United National Movement and its affiliates, we aim to hold these elections to the highest possible standard. These elections will be conducted with completely new means. This refers, first of all, to the use of electronic counters, in which 90% of our voters will participate in the country, and we are sure that all possibilities of speculation by radicals will be excluded as much as possible because they are always focused on sabotaging processes, causing damage, based on the sole goal," Mikanadze stated.

UNM's Tina Bokuchava Urges Discussion on Opposition Presidential Candidate

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Tina Bokuchava, leader of the United National Movement, emphasized the significance of a unified presidential candidate for the opposition.

Bokuchava stressed unity among opposition parties and the importance of selecting a common presidential candidate through collective efforts, urging a focus on national interests to drive positive change.

The UNM leader also mentioned that the decision of the current president, Salome Zourabichvili, is her personal prerogative, but stressed the need for collective efforts to bring about positive change.

"In the circumstances where different political parties will each have their own electoral number, prime ministerial candidate, and election program, it is possible for us to collectively agree on a common presidential candidate. I believe this would

be a significant step for the citizens of Georgia. Yes, we can create unity where it serves the country's interests. What President Salome Zourabichvili decides is her personal prerogative, but now is the time to fight for change. I hope each person realizes the positive role they can play," Bokuchava said.

When asked if President Zourabichvili could become the common opposition presidential candidate, Bokuchava emphasized the importance of initiating a discussion on the matter.

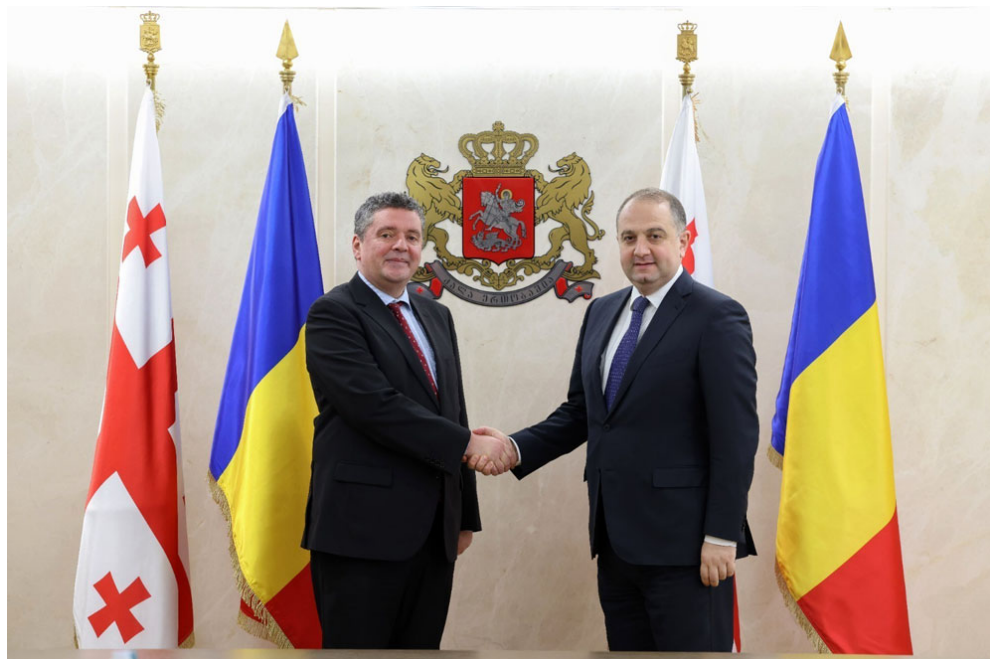
"I believe it's important to initiate a discussion about a common presidential candidate and carefully consider all possibilities. The key elements are unity, consolidation, agreement, and trust in the voters that the opposition can collaborate in the country's best interest. I am confident that with this mindset, we will be able to reach consensus on the specific candidate," Bokuchava said.



The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Defense Minister Irakli Chikovani Meets With Romanian Ambassador and Attaché



The Minister of Defense of Georgia, Irakli Chikovani, held an introductory meeting with the Romanian ambassador and defense attaché.

The minister thanked representatives from Romania for their unwavering support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, as well as its inte-

gration into NATO and the European Union.

The meeting emphasized the importance of the strategic partnership between Georgia and Romania, successful bilateral cooperation in the field of defense, as well as Romania's role and active par-

ticipation in the implementation of the NATO-Georgia Essential Package (NGEP).

The parties expressed hope for the further deepening and diversification of their existing close and consistent cooperation in various areas, including training and military education.

Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Samkharadze Meets With EU Special Representative Klaar



The Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, Nikoloz Samkharadze, met with Toivo Klaar, the EU's special representative for crises in the South Caucasus and Georgia, along with his advisers.

According to information from the Parliament of Georgia, the parties discussed security issues in Georgia and ongoing processes in the South Caucasus region. During the meeting, they emphasized Georgia's important role in the process

of regulating relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Nikoloz Samkharadze discussed with the EU Special Representative the difficult situation in the occupied regions and

the illegal actions of the Russian Federation. This included recent events in Sokhumi and the decision of the de facto government not to allow the EU Special Representative access to Abkhazia.

At the end of the meeting, Nikoloz Samkharadze and the European diplomat briefly discussed the country's internal political situation and the influence of the pre-election process on the occupied territories.

EU increases humanitarian aid to displaced Karabakh Armenians with extra Euro5.5 million

On 13 February, the European Commission allocated an additional Euro5.5 million in humanitarian aid to support the Armenians displaced from the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

In a press release, the Commission recalled that many people who fled to Armenia during last year's mass exodus took little or no belongings with them, leaving them dependent on emergency aid.

With this new funding, the EU aims to support people in need with access to food, shelter healthcare, mental health services, and protection.

A total of Euro1.5 million of this funding is assigned for di-



saster preparedness to enhance the resilience of vulnerable communities to potential crises. The remaining Euro4 million of humanitarian funding will mainly provide the displaced people with regular cash transfers and vouchers to help them cover their basic needs.

"This is the first winter for thousands of Karabakh Armenians who fled to Armenia last Autumn. In these challenging times, it is our humanitarian duty to provide protection and assistance to the people most in need," the EU's Commissioner for Crisis Management, Janez Lenarcic, said.

The funding comes in addition to the Euro12.2 million already announced by the European Commission in response to the mass exodus of Karabakh Armenians in September 2023.

(eunighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Thursday, February 15

Day Cloudy High: 14°C

Night Cloudy Low: 6°C

Friday, February 16

Day Showers High: 8°C

Night Showers Low: 3°C

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