

Chairman of European Integration Committee Addresses Inter-Parliamentary Conference on EU Security and Defense Issues

24th inter-parliamentary conference on CFSP/CSDP
Session II – The ongoing process of enlargement



Maka BOTCHORISHVILI
Georgia

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01:10

lenges facing the country.

"Georgia's struggle for independence and sovereignty has been ongoing for more than 30 years. Despite Russia's aggression and its illegal occupation of Georgian regions, we have managed to transform the country and place it among the ranks of democratic states. However, we still have a long way to go before reaching the final goal. We are committed to the necessary reforms and need the support of our allies and partners even more on this path," said Bochorishvili.

The Chairman of the European Integration Committee emphasized the importance of the effectiveness of the EU enlargement policy and the implementation of economic and political integration mechanisms in the EU for candidate countries.

"In today's complex, changing, and unpredictable world, time is very precious, and wasting it on incorrect perceptions and formalities would be a significant geopolitical mistake. "For the success of the enlargement policy, negotiations on EU membership with the candidate countries should begin immediately," Bochorishvili stated.

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

At the inter-parliamentary conference held in Bruges, Belgium, on issues of the European Union's unified foreign and security policy and defense

policy, Maka Bochorishvili, the chairman of the European Integration Committee, addressed her colleagues regarding the issue of EU expansion.

"It is significant that we are discussing the issue of EU ex-

pansion at the EU Security and Defense Conference. Today's discussion proves that the secure future of the European Union lies in our unity. Ensuring this unity requires the expansion of the space of peace and prosper-

ity—the European Union—without delay," said Bochorishvili.

Bochorishvili thanked the EU member states for their support and for granting candidate country status. She discussed Georgia's progress and the chal-

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The former Minister of Health, Zurab Azarashvili, has revealed that thousands of unregistered oncological medicines of dubious origin were being imported.

Azarashvili stated that allegedly at least 60 oncologists are involved in this scheme. Based on the medical certificates they provided, requests for funding of millions of GEL were submitted to both the ministry and municipalities. Meanwhile, oncology patients were prescribed and used drugs of unknown origin.

The former health minister stated that the appropriate discussion of this issue has already taken place at the professional council, and the case materials have been forwarded to law enforcement structures.

"Due to these and other valid reasons, canceling the limit set for oncology per patient is not possible, and early oncology diagnosis is only being initiated as a pilot program in state clinics. Taking into account the cost-saving effect, the total budget for oncology in 2024 is up to 350 million GEL, compared to just

20 million GEL in 2012," Azarashvili stated.

After Azarashvili published this statement, the prosecutor's office confirmed that they have launched an investigation into the matter.

The prosecutor's office has stated that the investigation of the criminal case involving the fraudulent appropriation of a significant amount of state funds is being conducted in accordance with Article 180, Part 3, subsection 'b' of the Criminal Code.

"The investigation was initiated upon an appeal from the Internal Audit Department of the Ministry of Labor, Health, and Social Protection regarding internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the occupied territories of Georgia. The appeal stated that during 2023, one private company imported pharmaceutical products from abroad, particularly oncology drugs, without authorization to enter the Georgian market. Subsequently, these products were administered to patients, financed both by their personal funds and within the framework of state funding programs," the statement reads.

Investigation Launched by Prosecutor's Office into Unregistered Oncological Drug Import



The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Abkhazia's De Facto Foreign Minister Commends Georgian Authorities; Urges Against Conflict



Abkhazia's de facto foreign minister, Inal Ardzinba, praised the Georgian authorities and expressed relief that the Georgian government appears 'rational'.

Ardzinba stated that "nobody wants war", and asserted that aggression against Abkhazia is perceived as aggression against Russia. He believes Georgia will

refrain from such actions.

"We, Abkhazians, ask ourselves why they haven't signed the agreement. Does Georgia really want to fight? Or do the Americans want to open a second front? We understand, one way or another, there have been reports that the Americans are

going to open a second front, but, thank God, the Georgian government is reasonable; no one needs war, including Georgia itself. Because today, according to the legal framework, aggression against the Republic of Abkhazia is aggression against the Russian Federation. Therefore, I am sure that Georgia will not do this," Ardzinba said.

Defense Minister Irakli Chikovani Meets with Ambassadors of China and Poland to Georgia

The Minister of Defense of Georgia Irakli Chikovani held an introductory meeting with Zhou Qian, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Georgia.

According to the Ministry of Defense, Irakli Chikovani thanked the Chinese ambassador for supporting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia.

The conversation reportedly touched upon the strategic relations between the countries and China's decision to establish a visa-free regime, as well as the importance of deepening cooperation.

Chikovani also met with the Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to Georgia, Mariusz Maszkiewicz.

"The parties discussed the successful cooperation between Georgia and Poland in the field of defense and future plans. The Minister of Defense also spoke with the Polish diplomat about Poland's contribution to the implementation of initiatives outlined in the NATO-Georgia Substantial Package (SNGP) and to the European Union



Monitoring Mission (EUMM).

Cooperation in military education, joint participation in multinational exercises, and col-

laboration in the military-industrial field were also noted," the statement reads.

EU and UNDP Foster Women's Empowerment and Promote Community Resilience in Georgia

'Hands for Peace' Gala Showcases Entrepreneurial Achievements of Conflict-Affected Women

TBILISI. 4 March 2024 – Women's empowerment remains a cornerstone of sustainable development and peacebuilding in conflict-affected communities. The European Union (EU) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), under the EU4Dialogue programme, are steadfast in their commitment to supporting women residing alongside Administrative Boundary Lines, bolstering their economic and social resilience, and creating opportunities for entrepreneurship, income generation, and professional advancement.

Throughout 2023 and 2024, the EU and UNDP, in partnership with local civil society or-

ganizations, municipalities, and communities, have championed women-led initiatives in conflict-affected regions. These initiatives directly impacted up to ten women-led community projects, benefiting a total of 1,500 internally displaced and conflict-affected women. Notably, a hundred women received entrepreneurial support to start their business ventures, while thirty others participated in internship and grant programmes.

The assistance provided by the EU and UNDP extended to twenty collective centres for internally displaced persons, trans-

forming the lives of 735 displaced and conflict-affected women through infrastructural projects and other support measures.

Hands for Peace

One such inspiring example is the Zugdidi-based organization 'Hands for Peace,' which is actively involved in community projects supported through the EU4Dialogue programme. Their initiative in Georgia's Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region brought about life-changing opportunities for twenty conflict-affected and internally displaced women.

Through a combination of handicraft training and life coaching sessions, the project participants acquired skills in knitting, tailoring, embroidery, and macramé, empowering them to earn a living, embrace personal growth, and embark on professional journeys. 'Hands for Peace' established a childcare space in their workshop, enabling

women to attend classes with their children. For many participants, it was the first experience of engaging in activities beyond their homes, thus transitioning from unpaid caregiving roles to paid employment and entrepreneurship.

On 23 February, the results of this impactful community initiative were showcased at the gala event in Zugdidi with participants presenting their masterful handicrafts and entrepreneurial accomplishments. This vibrant gathering, attended by around 250 guests, commenced with a captivating runway exhibition featuring crafts and hand-made garments adorned with traditional ornaments.

Speaking at the event, Giorgi Vardishvili, UNDP Team Leader for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, underscored the vital role of economic empowerment in fostering community resilience to crises. "Economic empowerment changes lives of

women affected by conflict and lays the groundwork for long-term community resilience. These initiatives extend beyond economic benefits. They empower individuals and inspire hope. UNDP will continue working with the European Union, local authorities, civil society organizations, and the private sector to support conflict-affected communities across Georgia."

Background Information:

EU4Dialogue: Support to Conflict Transformation in the South Caucasus and the Republic of Moldova is a joint initiative of the EU and UNDP under the broader EU4Dialogue programme. The project partners with local civil society organizations and grassroots groups to improve socio-economic conditions for people, build livelihoods, drive progress toward gender equality, promote youth engagement and support the peaceful transformation of conflict.



Weather

Tuesday, March 5

Day Partly Cloudy High: 14°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: 4°C

Wednesday, March 6

Day Mostly Cloudy High: 15°C

Night Showers Low: 7°C

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