

Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze Meets with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg

By Liza Mchedlidze

Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg met and held a joint press conference, during which they discussed the significance of the partnership between the Alliance and Georgia, underscoring Georgia's status as a close partner to NATO.

He highlighted the importance of Georgia being granted candidate country status by the European Union, noting that advancements in this direction would significantly influence the progress toward full membership in the Alliance.

"This direction continues to ensure stronger, democratic paths for integration, including the decision of Bucharest, which implies that Georgia will become a member state of the NATO alliance. The candidate status granted to Georgia will strengthen the prosperity aspirations and spirit in this direction in the country.

It is important that Georgia continues to strengthen local reforms, democratic values, and the rule of law, including free and open parliamentary elections this October," Stoltenberg said.

Kobakhidze expressed gratitude to NATO and the Secretary General for their support of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. He emphasized Georgia's commitment to NATO and its active participation in operations under NATO's auspices, contributing significantly to Euro-Atlantic security. Kobakhidze also praised the Secretary General's leadership during challenging times and reaffirmed Georgia's dedication to NATO-Georgia cooperation and the integration process.

"Your 10-year tenure as Secretary Gen-



eral of NATO coincided with unprecedented challenges and difficulties. However, many challenges have been overcome under your leadership, and NATO remains the main guarantor of Euro-Atlantic security. I am glad that today we once again discussed the issues of NATO-Georgia cooperation and our integration process.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my special thanks to NATO and personally to the Secretary General for their support of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Also, we highly appreciate the Secretary General's timely and fair statements regarding the current events in the occupied territories of Georgia.

Georgia is one of the most loyal and reliable partners of the Alliance, which I would like to emphasize once again. For years, our country has actively participated in ongoing operations under the auspices of NATO, thereby making a significant contribution to strengthening Euro-Atlantic security," Kobakhidze stated.

Georgia's Foreign Ministry Condemns Russian Presidential Elections in Occupied Regions

By Liza Mchedlidze

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia strongly con-

demned the Russian Federation's holding of presidential elections in the occupied regions of Georgia and the establishment of illegal polling stations to involve the local population on a massive scale.

The released statement by the

foreign ministry reads that this act constitutes a blatant violation of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity by Russia, grossly disregarding fundamental principles and norms of international law, as well as the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act.

As per the ministry, conducting elections in the occupied regions is unlawful in the context of the ongoing occupation. Moreover, it occurs while the population expelled from these territories due to ethnic cleansing remains unable to return to their homes.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia urged the Russian Federation to cease its actions undermining Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and to fulfill its international obligations, including the August 12, 2008 ceasefire agreement brokered by the European Union.

Furthermore, the Ministry called upon the international community to provide a proper assessment and respond to Russia's continued illegal actions

in the occupied regions, which aim to erode Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

"Conducting any elections in the occupied regions is illegal against the backdrop of the ongoing occupation, as established by international courts, among others, especially considering that the population expelled from these territories due to ethnic cleansing still lacks the opportunity to return to their homes.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia calls upon the Russian Federation to cease its actions against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia and to fulfill its international obligations, including the ceasefire agreement of August 12, 2008, brokered by the European Union.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia appeals to the international community to provide a proper assessment and respond to Russia's further illegal actions in the occupied regions, which aim to violate Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity," the statement reads.



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The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

President Salome Zourabichvili Calls for International Response Amid Russian Elections in Occupied Georgian Territories



President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili condemned the elections conducted by Russia in the occupied territories of Georgia and noted that she raised this

issue today during her meeting with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg.

“It is completely unacceptable and illegal to hold the presidential elections of the Russian Federation in the occupied regions of Georgia. This once again grossly violates Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity

tional community to respond appropriately to these illegal actions of the Russian Federation, which undermine the country’s sovereignty.

The President of Georgia raised this issue with Jens Stoltenberg today during the meeting held at the Orbeliani Palace and condemned it once again,” reads the statement issued by the President’s administration.

President Salome Zourabichvili Hosts NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at Orbeliani Palace

President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili hosted NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Orbeliani Palace, discussing Georgia’s Euro-Atlantic integration progress. They also touched on the war in Ukraine, Russia’s aggression, and the need for international solidarity with Ukraine.

“Additionally, amidst heightened regional threats due to the conflict in Ukraine and Russia’s aggressive actions, the parties

underscored the importance of Black Sea security.

The NATO Secretary General reiterated his steadfast support for Georgia’s territorial integrity and sovereignty during the meeting with the President.

The discussion during the

emphasized that such actions grossly violate Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, flagrantly disregarding international norms.

Furthermore, the President highlighted the situation in the occupied territories, including



meeting also addressed the holding of Russian Federation presidential elections in Georgia’s occupied regions. The President

the Bichvinta country houses, the military-naval fleet in Ochamchire, and Sokhumi airport,” the information reads.

EU Twinning project on road safety in Georgia summarises its results

The closing conference of the EU-funded Twinning project, ‘Support in Establishment of Comprehensive Road Safety Database and Further Improvement of Road Safety Management in Georgia’, took place on 16 March in Tbilisi.

With a budget of Euro1.3 million, the project was initiated to enhance road safety manage-



and completely contradicts international norms.

Today, as Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region remain occupied, I appeal to the interna-

ment in Georgia as part of the EU-Georgia Association Agenda. Its primary objective was to strengthen institutional policy-making capabilities and improve crash data collection and analysis methods in road safety.

As a result, substantial progress has been achieved in enhancing electronic road safety databases over the past two years through tailored capacity-building programmes designed for road safety data management personnel. Additionally, a robust Road Safety Management system has been proposed alongside

the concept of a National Trauma Registry.

The project was fully financed by the European Union and implemented by the Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy of Poland in partnership with Vilnius Technical University. The project beneficiaries are the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the National Centre for Disease Control and Public Health.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Russia – Results of the presidential election (18 March 2024)

France notes the expected result of the presidential election by which Vladimir Putin continues as President of the Russian Federation for a fifth term.

The electoral process in Russia went ahead against the backdrop of a heightened crackdown on civil society and all forms of opposition to the regime, ever

greater restrictions on freedom of expression, and a ban on the operation of independent media outlets. The political opposition figure Alexei Navalny died a few weeks before this election, among other things following a hardening of his conditions of detention by the Russian authorities. Candidates opposed to continuing the war in Ukraine were not allowed to compete in the election, significantly reducing its level of pluralism. International standards in terms of candidates’ equal access to the media during the campaign were not complied with.

Once again, the conditions for a free, pluralist and democratic election were not met. France salutes the courage of many Russian citizens who peacefully demonstrated their opposition to this attack on their fundamental political rights.

France regrets the fact that, contrary to its international commitments, Russia decided not to invite the observation mission of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which meant that

the election went ahead without any impartial international observation.

France also condemns the fact that Russia organized a so-called “election” in the Ukrainian territories temporarily occupied by Russia: in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, as well as part of the regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson. The illegal organization of a so-called “election” in the Ukrainian territories temporarily occupied by Russia constitutes a further violation of international law and

the Charter of the United Nations. France does not and will never recognize the holding of this so-called “election” and its results, and reaffirms its commitment to Ukraine’s sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity.

France also condemns the fact that Russia set up polling stations in the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as the region of Transnistria in the Republic of Moldova, without the consent of the Georgian or Moldovan authorities.

(www.diplomatie.gouv.fr)

Weather

Tuesday, March 19

Day Showers High: 9°C

Night Rain Low: 6°C

Wednesday, March 20

Day Light Rain High: 12°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: 3°C

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