

President Zourabichvili Urges Prime Minister Kobakhidze to Extend Transparency Focus



BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

In a joint press conference following his meeting with Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz sharply criticized the controversial 'Russian law' proposed by the

Georgian Dream party. Chancellor Scholz expressed his hope that Georgia would reject the draft law, which has drawn significant concern from both the European Union and Georgian citizens.

"We are very critical, like the whole EU, of the law on so-called agents, and

after this law was suspended, we very much hoped that it would not be on the agenda again. The new draft law, practically unchanged, is almost the same as that of last year, and we very much hope that Georgia will not adopt this law and that the parliament will take into account

both our and the Georgian population's critical position," Sholtz said.

Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili responded to Chancellor Olaf Scholz's critical remarks about the proposed 'Russian law', noting that she anticipated such feedback as it echoes widespread concerns among EU officials regarding the law's potential to hinder Georgia's path toward European integration. She emphasized that if Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze truly prioritizes transparency, his focus should extend to the judiciary and government officials, not just foreign influences.

"What do you mean by 'not vetting'? If you want transparency, tell Scholz that I want transparency about judges, our former prime minister, or the future prime minister, and the chairman of the CEC, who is being appointed now. And it turns out he is accumulating capital. I don't know what it means. I've worked in various positions abroad for 60 years, and I haven't been able to accumulate capital in this manner yet, and they're aware of it.

This is the transparency that is really part of democracy that the public expects, and the public wants to know who governs, how they govern, where the money is spent. If you ask for this transparency from foreigners who have brought into this country 30 billion, if not more, that has been spent in healthcare, agriculture, education, schools... Here you want transparency, and if the funds went somewhere else, for example, let's take Gelati, the Americans paid, but the fraud was committed by the Georgians, and no one has been punished for it yet..." said Zourabichvili.

Prime Minister Kobakhidze Calls for Public Dialogue with Foreign Diplomats on 'Russian Law' Criticisms

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze has issued a letter addressing criticism from foreign diplomats regarding 'Russian law'. He extended an invitation for a public dialogue to discuss these concerns. Kobakhidze accused diplomats of actively intervening in the country's political discourse, attempting to assume a legislative role by dictating which laws parliament should adopt or reject.

"Although this practice of replacing the political opposition does not meet the standards of diplomacy, given the paucity of the political and intellectual resources of the opposition, we can treat it with some understanding.

However, we cannot understand the widespread practice when foreign diplomats cannot respond to our arguments behind closed doors with counterarguments and still make groundless political state-



ments in the public space," the statement reads.

The Prime Minister noted that the criticism from several foreign diplomats regarding the Russian law lacked any arguments or justification. He expressed concern that 'unfounded' criticism from foreign diplomats could negatively impact societal perceptions of their respective countries, posing serious risks. He emphasized the importance of Georgian society maintaining trust in partner countries, labeling it as their duty and responsibility.

"Unfounded criticism, often heard from foreign diplomats, is generalized by society to their respective countries, entailing serious risks. Georgian society must maintain trust in partner countries, which is our duty and responsibility to uphold.

Ambassadors periodically request closed meetings. We have never refused such meetings and

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.6709; Euro - 2.8453; GBP - 3.3333; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.8573; Swiss Franc - 2.9244

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are ready for them in the future. However, due to the non-transparent political discussion

surrounding the draft law "On transparency of foreign influence," which harms the trust of Georgian society towards our partner countries, I suggest that

the ambassadors of the United States of America, the European Union, and EU member states engage in a public discussion with us about this draft law.

I am sure that in the conditions of the live broadcast of the subject discussion between the leaders of the government and the ambassadors, the Georgian

society will create a much clearer idea of the essence of the draft law and the need to adopt it for the protection of state sovereignty," Kobakhidze stated.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

The President of Georgia Refers to Georgian Dream as 'Russian Dream'



The President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili, has called the ruling party the 'Russian Dream'. She stated in an inter-

view with TV Pirveli that she refrained from making such an assessment for a long time, but now discussions about the country's independence and European path have emerged.

"For a long time, I refrained from many things because I

thought that when the president of the country gives qualifications to the government, for example, is it pro-Russian or not - I was asked many times abroad.

I have always refrained because you cannot let the country decide its own way, but now we are at such a crossroads and an 'either-or' situation that... what is required of the president is neutrality, caution, thinking about the state, thinking about the state today. Thinking about independence and saving the path of Europe," said Zurabishvili.

In response to the clarifying question posed by the journalist, "Is it the 'Georgian Dream' or the 'Russian Dream'?", the president answered, "It is a Russian dream".

Chairman of Georgian Dream Accuses President of Georgia of Collaboration with Extremist Opposition

Irakli Gharibashvili, chairman of Georgian Dream, accused the president of Georgia of aligning with the "radical extremist opposition" and coordinating with them. When asked



about President Zourabichvili's statement labeling Georgian Dream as a 'Russian dream', Gharibashvili claimed that the president's actions are in line with hostile forces both inside and outside the country.

Gharibashvili accused Zourabichvili of being an opposition figure from the beginning, claiming that her actions contribute to sabotage, tension, and

polarization in society.

"The so-called president no longer deserves so much attention from us. I did not personally support Zourabichvili. I wasn't in politics then, so I'm fine with that. Salome Zourabichvili is an opposition figure from start to finish. All her actions bring sabotage and, in general, tension and polarization in society," Gharibashvili said.

EU and Germany support water supply system and wastewater treatment in Ajara



With EU and German support, the Ajara Rural Water and Wastewater Treatment Programme in Georgia was launched in Ochkhauri,

beginning of construction works by the project in Kobuleti. Seven reservoirs, three intakes, and five treatment plants are planned for selected areas in the town.

Construction works are also planned in Khulo, Shuakhevi, Keda, and Khelvachauri municipalities.

The Ajara Rural Water Supply and Wastewater Programme will be implemented with co-financing by KfW Development Bank (Euro 43 million) and the European Union (Euro 6.95 million) and a local contribution of the government of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara (Euro 54.6 million).

The measures will improve the level of hygiene and everyday quality of life in the region, and stimulate tourism development.

(eunighbourseast.eu)



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Tuesday, April 16

Day Partly Cloudy High: 22°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: 9°C

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