

PM Irakli Kobakhidze Addresses 79th UNGA, Emphasizes Economy and Regional Stability

By Liza Mchedlidze

On September 25, Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze addressed the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). His speech largely focused on Georgia's macroeconomic achievements and its strategic role in regional stability, but made no direct reference to Russia when discussing Ukraine or Georgia's occupied territories.

Kobakhidze began by praising the Georgian Dream government, asserting that Georgia is on a path of peaceful development. He highlighted the country's progress over the past decade, emphasizing the stability and growth achieved under his government's leadership.

While addressing global challenges, Kobakhidze briefly touched on the war in Ukraine, acknowledging the "unprecedented level of uncertainty and humanitarian crisis" it has caused. He reaffirmed Georgia's "firm" support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity but did not mention Russia's involvement in the conflict.

Kobakhidze also emphasized peace efforts in the South Caucasus, expressing support for the peaceful resolution of conflicts in the region, particularly between Armenia and Azerbaijan. He underscored Georgia's strategic location and its significance as a transit hub, highlighting the country's growing ties with China and Central Asia, and its role in the Middle Corridor project.

A substantial portion of his speech was dedicated to Georgia's strong economic



performance, citing global rankings where the country surpasses many European nations. He emphasized the government's commitment to building a stronger, more prosperous future for Georgia.

When addressing Georgia's occupied territories, Kobakhidze briefly remarked that "despite the fact that 20 percent of our territories are under illegal occupation, we continue to thrive." He did not mention Russia in this context, opting

instead to focus on Georgia's resilience and growth. He concluded by addressing the people of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali, expressing hope for a future where "we can live together in one happy, united, and developed Georgia."

Ukraine Condemns Use of War Imagery in Georgian Dream Political Banners

By Liza Mchedlidze

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine has expressed strong disapproval of new political banners displayed in Tbilisi by the ruling party Georgian Dream. The banners depict tragic images from Russia's war against Ukraine, including the bombing of Mariupol's theater and other war-torn sites.

One side of the banner shows the theater in Mariupol, which was bombed by Russian forces in 2022, claiming numerous lives. The theater was sheltering thousands of civilians, including children, when it was struck, despite the word "children" being written in large letters in Russian outside the building. On the opposite side of the banner, an image of the Senaki Theater in Georgia is displayed. Another banner has an image of a cathedral in Ukraine that was bombed by Russia next to the Trinity Cathedral in Georgia.

Ukraine's Foreign Ministry condemned the use of these images, stating that it is "unacceptable" to exploit the tragic consequences of Russia's war, the suffering of thousands of innocent people, and the destruction of cultural heritage for political advertising.

"The Georgian people may not fear a new war as long as Ukraine continues to resist Russian aggression," the ministry said, adding that the heavy cost of Ukraine's resistance contributes to peace in Georgia. The statement urged the Georgian government and political actors to refrain from using the war against Ukraine for internal political purposes.

The ministry reaffirmed Ukraine's steadfast support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, emphasizing its commitment to Georgia's internationally recognized borders. Ukraine also expressed hope that Georgia's upcoming parliamentary elections would be peaceful and democratic, and that the country would continue on its strategic path toward joining the EU and NATO.



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By MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

A Visit That Exposed the Strained Reality of U.S.-Georgia Relations

The presence of Georgia's Prime Minister, Irakli Kobakhidze, at the 79th session of the UN in the U.S. did not serve as an opportunity to improve relations with Washington, even in the slightest. On the contrary, no U.S. official met with him, and an invitation to the traditional dinner with the U.S. president was also canceled. The Georgian Dream government attributes this to support for the opposition, while opposition representatives claim that the U.S. has ended relations with the current Georgian government. They argue that the recent events further prove that the October 26 election must bring an end to Georgian Dream's rule.

Relations between the Georgian Dream government and Western partners are worsening by the day. The Georgian government has been making anti-Western statements, and Georgia's strategic partners are increasingly imposing sanctions, reducing or canceling financial support, and making decisions to sanction individuals. Recently, it became known that the U.S. plans to sanction Bidzina Ivanishvili, while the European Union is considering canceling visa-free travel with Georgia. The question now is whether these measures will take place before or after the October 26 parliamentary elections, especially if Georgian

Dream attempts to rig the election.

These once unimaginable decisions by Georgia's strategic partners are driven by the democratic backslide in the country under Georgian Dream rule, which became particularly evident after the adoption of the Foreign Agents Law. One of the main pre-election promises of Georgian Dream is the destruction of opposition forces, which they refer to as the "collective National Movement." Georgian Dream leaders insist that the deterioration of relations with the West is not due to their actions but rather the work of the "global war party," which, they claim, is trying to drag Georgia into a war against Russia.

It's difficult to predict what Georgian Dream would do in terms of relations with the West if they remain in power. However, they understand well that cutting ties with the West would have catastrophic results in the elections. Therefore, they are saying that the war in Ukraine will end soon, relations with the West will be restored immediately, and they still intend to join the European Union, but "with dignity." They also claim that this will happen by 2030.

In this pre-election context, we should view the participation of Prime Minister Irakli

Kobakhidze in the 79th session of the UN General Assembly. Kobakhidze traveled to the U.S. on September 22 and gave a speech on September 25. The Georgian Dream government had hoped that the Prime Minister would also meet with U.S. officials. It was even reported that they sought help from Israel to facilitate such meetings. Even though such a meeting wouldn't have changed anything in terms of the Georgian Dream's actual foreign policy, it would have given them the opportunity to claim during the election campaign that everything was fine with U.S.-Georgia relations.

Before departing for the UN General Assembly, Irakli Kobakhidze met with U.S. Ambassador Robin Dunnigan in the Georgian government's administration building to discuss the sanctions imposed by the U.S. Kobakhidze warned the ambassador that "with this decision, the American side is nearing a critical point, and if another similar decision is made, Georgia may fundamentally reassess its position regarding Georgian-American relations."

After this stern warning, information spread that sanctions would soon be imposed on Bidzina Ivanishvili. Upon arriving in New York, Kobakhidze

continued speaking in his usual assertive manner. On September 23, he told a segment of the Georgian media that "the blackmail against Mr. Bidzina Ivanishvili continues." He likely would have discussed this with U.S. officials if he had met with them. However, it soon became clear that the U.S. administration refused all meetings with the Georgian delegation, including a meeting with National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan.

Moreover, U.S. President Joe Biden removed Irakli Kobakhidze from the guest list for the traditional reception held for visiting leaders attending the UN session. Just a few hours before the scheduled meeting with Biden, Kobakhidze was informed that the U.S. president would not meet with him and that he was an unwelcome guest at the traditional dinner. The audience was canceled. This information was first reported by "Voice of America," and shortly after, the U.S. embassy in Georgia explained the reason for the cancellation. Robin Dunnigan's office openly clarified that the leader of Bidzina Ivanishvili's government was excluded from the list of world leaders due to his anti-democratic policies and slanderous statements. This was the first time that the American president's adminis-

tration had given such a clear and firm response to the oligarch's team for acting against the will of the Georgian people.

Georgian media also reported that the fiasco in the U.S. led to a confrontation between Kobakhidze and Georgia's ambassador to the U.S., David Zalkaliani, which resulted in Zalkaliani's resignation. However, later, Georgian Dream representatives denied both the resignation and the confrontation with the Prime Minister. According to reports, the reason for the dispute was that Zalkaliani knew in advance that Kobakhidze had been removed from the protocol but did not inform the Prime Minister.

The decision by Biden confused the leaders of Georgian Dream. At first, the Speaker of Parliament didn't believe it. Then, they criticized the hospitality, dismissed it as unserious, and finally concluded that the Americans did it to support the opposition. This was also Kobakhidze's comment. According to him, "this was a kind of humanitarian act in favor of the opposition," but it would "have no practical effect." On the other hand, opposition figures made sharp remarks, saying that the October 26 election must bring a change of power in Georgia.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Abkhazia's Occupation Regime Urges Irakli Kobakhidze to Sign Non-Use of Force Agreement and Recognize Abkhaz Independence

The de facto government of Abkhazia has appealed to Irakli Kobakhidze, the Georgian Prime Minister, urging him to sign a document on the non-use of force and officially recognize Abkhazia as an independent state. This appeal comes in response to a recent statement made by



Kobakhidze during his speech at the 79th session of the UN General Assembly.

In his address, Kobakhidze spoke directly to the people of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali regions, stating:

"I would like to use this opportunity and address our people on the other side of the occupation line, in the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions. All our steps are aimed at helping our people, and one day we, together with our children, can live together in a happy, united, and developed Georgia."

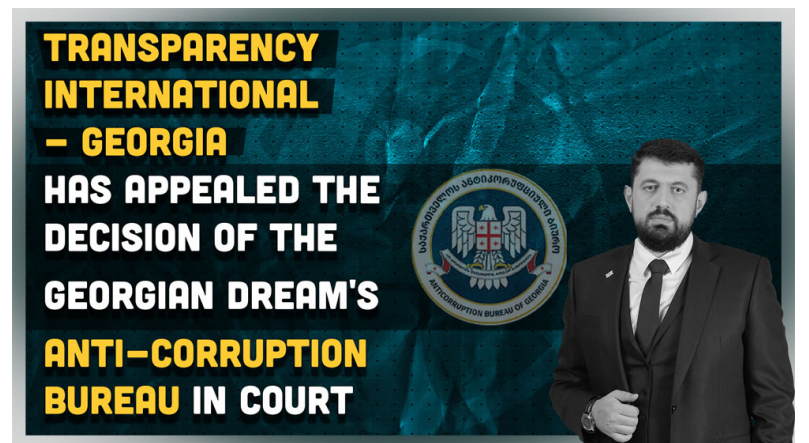
The de facto Ministry of For-

eign Affairs of Abkhazia criticized this statement, referring to it as "rhetoric" that has been repeated by the Georgian leadership "many times in the same mythical terms."

The ministry went on to state: "We believe that if the government of Georgia continues with the same spirit, we will not achieve positive results in overcoming the past. We once again call on Georgia to sign a legally binding document on the non-use of force and to recognize the Republic of Abkhazia as a sovereign and independent state."

Transparency International – Georgia Files Lawsuit Against Anti-Corruption Bureau's Decision

Transparency International – Georgia has filed an administrative lawsuit with the Tbilisi City Court, seeking to annul the recent decision issued by the head of the Anti-Corruption Bureau, Razhden Kuprashvili. The law-



suit challenges the Bureau's September 24 decision, which classified TI Georgia, its director Eka Gigauri, as well as the organization Choose Europe and its director Khatuna Lagazidze and co-founders, as entities with declared electoral goals.

TI Georgia argues that the decision to label them as electoral entities was entirely unfounded and illegal. In their statement, the organization noted: "The monitoring organization Transparency International – Georgia

and its executive director, Eka Gigauri, were completely baselessly and illegally considered entities with declared election goals, and relevant regulations were issued to them."

Along with the lawsuit, TI Georgia also filed a petition with the court, requesting the suspension of the Anti-Corruption Bureau's decision until the dispute is resolved. The organization hopes to prevent the decision's enforcement while the case is ongoing.

Weather

Friday, September 27

Day Showers
High: 20°C

Night Mostly Cloudy
Low: 14°C

Saturday, September 28

Day Showers
High: 20°C

Night Mostly Cloudy
Low: 14°C

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43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi, 0108, Georgia

Founded by Prof.

Zaza Gachechiladze

Tamar Gachechiladze

Publisher

Mob.: +995 599 565621; +995 577 760000

E-mail: messenger@messenger.com.ge

http://www.messenger.com.ge/

Nino Metreveli

Commercial Director

Mariam Mchedlidze

Editor-in-Chief

Khatuna Gogichaishvili

Layout Designer, Photographer

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