

PM Irakli Kobakhidze Meets with Azerbaijani President Amid Diplomatic Disputes with EU Delegation

By Liza Mchedlidze

On November 11, 2024, Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze met with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliiev at the 29th UN Climate Change Conference in Baku. The two leaders discussed key issues, emphasizing energy security and cooperation within the Middle Corridor initiative.

Kobakhidze underscored the importance of deepening energy partnerships between the two nations, noting that Georgia and Azerbaijan are "connected by very important strategic projects." They also highlighted the need for regional security and stability, with both leaders affirming their commitment to these goals. Additionally, Kobakhidze emphasized Georgia's constitutional commitment to environmental protection and expressed interest in sharing Georgia's experience in ecological governance.

While Kobakhidze engaged in talks in Baku, senior members of parliament from eight EU countries visited Georgia to observe the post-election landscape. Kobakhidze, however, criticized these European MPs, stating that the government avoided meeting them due to "direct involvement in the election campaign" by certain delegation members, which he argued undermines "the attitude a European politician should have towards a sovereign country."

The Prime Minister also addressed two controversial laws—the anti-LGBT law and the foreign agent law—asserting that similar legislation is expected to be passed in the U.S., and affirmed Georgia's readiness to discuss the foreign agent law with international partners.

Addressing the current post-election



atmosphere, Kobakhidze dismissed opposition claims of election irregularities and downplayed their impact. He pointed to the 2020 April 19 agreement, which was reached after similar opposition attempts to challenge election outcomes, saying that the opposition lacks the influence to force the government into negotiations this time. He warned that if opposition

actions escalate, the government might consider filing a constitutional lawsuit to challenge their legitimacy, though he expressed doubt that such measures would be necessary.

The Prime Minister also announced that the Prosecutor's Office has initiated investigations following allegations of election violations. However, he accused

opposition politicians of avoiding participation in the investigation, suggesting that they "have no arguments." He contrasted Georgia's response to election issues with other countries, including the U.S. and Moldova, arguing that in these countries, similar electoral complaints have gone unaddressed.

EU Lawmakers Urge Fair Election Investigation During Georgia Visit

By Liza Mchedlidze



Senior lawmakers from eight EU nations—Germany, France, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Sweden, and Finland visited Georgia, meeting first with President Salome Zourabichvili. The visit, focusing on Georgia's political crisis and recent controversial parliamentary elections, included a press conference with President Zourabichvili and German Foreign Affairs Committee Chair Michael Roth. Government officials declined to meet with the delegation.

President Zourabichvili welcomed the delegation as "devoted friends of Georgia," underscoring their commitment to Georgia's democratic journey. She emphasized the country's current crisis, describing the October 26 elections as marred by "one-party management" and

"rigged processes," leading to a "legitimacy" crisis for the government. Zourabichvili expressed hope that the delegation's presence would help chart a path toward restoring trust in Georgia's institutions.

Michael Roth, speaking for the EU delegation, reaffirmed their role as "friends of the Georgian people" while addressing Georgia's government's claims of external interference. "We are not here to promote regime change," he clarified. Roth cited "serious concerns" regarding alleged vote manipulation, voter intimidation, and violations of ballot secrecy, which he argued compromised the integrity of the election.

Roth voiced strong support for an independent investigation into these issues. He warned that if local authorities fail to ensure transparency, international bodies like the Council of Europe and the OSCE may need to step in.

"Without clarification of these allegations, the EU cannot recognize these elections as legitimate," he stated.

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.7288; Euro - 2.9138; GBP - 3.5185; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.7832; Swiss Franc - 3.1041

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The German lawmaker also suggested potential consequences if Georgia's government obstructs a credible investigation. "We will call for individual sanctions against those responsible," he warned, suggesting even visa-free travel to the EU

could be reconsidered if democratic principles continue to erode. He urged the Georgian government to abandon "anti-

European" policies, such as the Russian-style Foreign Agent law, which he claimed could hinder Georgia's EU ambitions.

As the delegation spoke, demonstrators gathered outside Orbeliani Palace, thanking the EU lawmakers for their support

in challenging the contested election results. Members of the delegation, including Roth, briefly joined the protesters.

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The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Papuashvili Rejects Meeting with EU Delegation, Cites Political Bias



Chairman of the Georgian Parliament, Shalva Papuashvili, declined to meet with visiting lawmakers from eight European Union countries, citing what he described as the delegation's "unfriendly attitude" and "political bias." In a written statement, Papuashvili criticized certain members of the delegation, particularly Lithuanian MP •ygimantas Pavilionis, for previously supporting Georgian opposition parties and allegedly interfering in Georgia's recent elections. He stated that "this involvement violated principles of non-interference", claiming that such

actions contributed to "political polarization" and damaged trust in European institutions within Georgian society.

Papuashvili also referenced past instances where EU members voiced support for "false narratives," such as claims

surrounding the detention of former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili. He asserted that some EU politicians' rhetoric and actions risk undermining Georgia's stability and democratic process, warning that using "the EU enlargement process as a weapon" to challenge election outcomes would erode public trust.

Papuashvili affirmed Georgia's openness to dialogue with other members of the delegation, provided it respects principles of sovereignty and equality, signaling that only constructive parliamentary

diplomacy would be welcome.

EU Delegation Meets Georgian Opposition Leaders



EU delegation from 8 countries visited Georgia to address the political crisis following contested elections. After meeting with President Salome Zourabichvili, the delegation met with opposition leaders. The talks focused on the alleged election irregularities, the prospects for an independent investigation, and possible EU responses to actions taken by the ruling Georgian Dream government.

Dimitri Tskitishvili from the Gakharia-For Georgia party highlighted the meeting's focus on devising a collective opposition strategy. He noted that discussions covered potential solutions, the risks Georgia faces, and the anti-

patented responses from GD. Tskitishvili said the conversation was essential for aligning the opposition's stance, both individually and as a unified force.

Zurab Japaridze from the Coalition for Change underscored the potential consequences if Georgian Dream continues its current course. "There was talk that not only could Georgia's European integration be halted, but we might also lose benefits such as free trade, visa-free travel, and candidate status," he warned.

Badri Japaridze from Strong Georgia stated that the EU's response could become increasingly severe. He linked the EU's potential actions to the Georgian Dream's perceived "anti-European" direction, adding that GD's moves are jeopardizing Georgia's standing in Europe.

Ukraine: EU extends mandate of Military Assistance Mission for two years

On 8 November, the Council of the European Union adopted a decision extending the man-



date of the European Union Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine) for a further two years.

The budget allocation for the period from 14 November 2024 to 15 November 2026 will amount to almost Euro 409 million.

Established in October 2022, EUMAM Ukraine remains a key tool for the EU's military support to Ukraine, with its core objective of contributing to enhancing the military

capacity of Ukraine's Armed Forces (UAF).

EUMAM Ukraine has trained 63,000 UAF soldiers so far, the equivalent of ten brigades. The mission will train an additional 15,000 troops in the coming months, bringing the total number of soldiers trained to 75,000 by the end of winter 2024/2025.

In line with the newly taken decision, EUMAM Ukraine will also cooperate with NATO, in particular the NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine (NSATU), and exchange information with the latter.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Tuesday, November 12

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 15°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 7°C

Wednesday, November 13

Day Showers
High: 11°C

Night Mostly Cloudy
Low: 5°C

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