

# NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

October 16-17

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## ❖ Foreign Affairs

### 1. Eastern Partnership ministerial conference held, Georgia emphasises its ultimate goal

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) ministerial was held in Luxemburg yesterday, where Georgian Foreign Minister David Zalkaliani once again emphasized that his country's ultimate goal is EU membership.

Georgia has a very ambitious plan. Our eventual goal is the full membership of the EU and we need to take more effective steps to attain this goal. I spoke to partners on the roadmap and the principles on which it is based. A higher level of involvement from their part is needed," Zalkaliani said.

The participants, which included EU leaders and representatives from six EaP member countries, discussed the progress made by the countries involved in the initiative, the future prospects of the Eastern Partnership, and challenges facing the region (*Agenda.ge, October 16, 2018*).

### 2. Georgia improves ranking on Global Competitiveness Index

Georgia ranks 66th among 140 countries in the Global Competitiveness Index of 2018. In the index Georgia's position has improved by one point in comparison to its standing in 2017.

Georgia has a better standing in the rating than do Azerbaijan (69th place), Armenia (70th place) and Ukraine (83rd place) (*Agenda.ge, October 17, 2018*).

### 3. Austrian ambassador says Georgian gov't efforts to transform country into regional hub are successful

Austrian Ambassador to Georgia Arad Benko says that the efforts of the Georgian Dream government to transform the country into a regional, financial, logistic, trade and tourism hub are successful.

Benko stated during his meeting with Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze today that the Georgian government is taking steps to fully use the country's strategic, geopolitical location.

Benko and Bakhtadze also discussed Georgian-Austrian relations, Georgia's European integration process, the reforms carried out in Georgia, the country's "positive business environment", and Austrian companies' "growing investment interest in Georgia." (*Agenda.ge, October 17, 2018*).

### 4. Georgian Emergency Management Service signs deal with Motorola to develop digital systems

The agency announced today that they will buy from Motorola:

6 base stations with all necessary satellite and cable accessories;

130 stationary radio stations;

20 motor radio stations;

830 handheld radio stations;

255 shoulder microphones;

2 dispatcher consoles;

GSM network integration system, and;

10 units of telecommunication radio stations.

Motorola will be responsible for the maintenance of the systems for two years and it will also retrain staff in the agency to manage the systems (*Agenda.ge, October 17, 2018*).

#### **5. Tbilisi hosts the international Welcome Challenge forum**

Georgia's capital of Tbilisi will host the International Forum of Innovations for Hospitality and Tourism Industry, the Welcome Challenge on October 23-26 this year.

The International Forum of Innovations for Hospitality and Tourism Industry, the Welcome Challenge, is an annual event connecting investors and startup companies. It will be held in Tbilisi with the support of the Georgian National Tourism Administration.

The forum will bring together the most innovative startups in the field, the industry's leading experts and representatives of major international corporations and financial companies looking for new investment opportunities (*Agenda.ge, October 17, 2018*).

#### **6. Senior fellow of German Marshall Fund: Georgian democratic reforms will lead to NATO membership**

Jonathan Katz, a senior fellow with the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) stated in Washington D.C. yesterday that the democratic reforms which are being carried out in Georgia will lead to "very significant outcomes."

Georgia will definitely become the member of NATO," he stated during the discussion "Keeping Georgia's Euroatlantic Future on Track. "

Katz spoke about Georgia's importance for the United States and said that high level bilateral visits between Georgia and the US prove the US firm support for Georgia (*Agenda.ge, October 17, 2018*).

### **❖ Internal Affairs**

#### **7. Prosecutor's Office releases audio recording involving figures connected to the Khorava Murder Case**

The Georgian Chief Prosecutor's Office has released an audio recording to the public today that allegedly involves figures in the Khorava Murder case.

This new release, comes in the wake of the October 14 release by Rustavi 2 of a related audio recording, in which imprisoned former official of the Georgian Chief Prosecutor's Office official Mirza Subeliani claims that he has "serious compromising materials" against the Georgian Dream leadership.

The Chief Prosecutor's Office stated that they launched an investigation into the recordings on 12 October, before one of the three recordings would have been released by the opposition-minded TV channel.

The office says that Rustavi 2 supposedly had an access to all the three audio recordings, which were allegedly, illegally recorded in prison in July and October 2018.

Rustavi 2 released the audio recording which was taped in October. It is unknown why the TV channel refrained from releasing other recordings," stated the Chief Prosecutor's Office and aired the audio recording which was made in July (*Agenda.ge, October 16, 2018*).

#### **8. Parliament speaker: Our opponents' election campaign is far from European standards**

Kobakhidze says that opponents:

- Are abusing Zourabichvili.
- Are trying to exercise pressure on her supporters.
- Trying to derange Zourabichvili's meetings with voters.
- Are making false promises, as the president has been deprived of many of his/her previous rights.
- Have registered fake parties to have access to budgetary funds and free television ads.
- Are using Rustavi 2 TV channel for spreading false information and broadcasting staged audio recordings.

Kobakhidze also said that Rustavi 2 does not invite the members of the ruling party on its shows as the channel is "only engaged with biased anti-government propaganda." (*Agenda.ge, October 16, 2018*).

#### **9. Georgian environmental agency: most air pollutants within normal range in cities**

A recent study by the National Environmental Agency (NEA) shows that most air pollutants are within the normal range in Tbilisi, Kutaisi and Batumi.

NEA of the Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia conducts continuous monitoring of atmospheric air quality using automated measurement stations.

The most recent tests measured the concentration of eight pollutants in the atmosphere in Tbilisi, Batumi, and Kutaisi. The NEA found the presence of all measured substances to be within normal levels, except for nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and solid particle (PM<sub>10</sub>) concentrations.

Concretely, the concentrations of nitrogen dioxide observed on Tsereteli Avenue in Tbilisi were found to be 1.4 times higher than the annual average. On Abuseridze Street in Batumi, the NO<sub>2</sub> was 1.5 times higher than the annual average (*Agenda.ge, October 16, 2018*).

#### **10. Tbilisi Mayor: UNM has the right to hold campaign march, but no one will be allowed to stir conflict**

"In the letter they said that around 100,000 supporters of the opposition will take to the streets and this will create problems for transport and pedestrians.

Freedom of expression is fully protected in our country and the opposition party will be allowed to hold the demonstration. If there is a need to block roads, the roads will be blocked and appropriate agencies of the City Hall will take care of the issue," Kaladze said (*Agenda.ge, October 17, 2018*).

#### **11. Chief Prosecutor's Office says previous leadership plotted murder of late Georgian billionaire Badri Patarkatsishvili**

The Georgian Chief Prosecutor's Office announced today that they have recordings which prove that the previous, United National Movement leadership was plotting to kill Georgian billionaire Badri Patarkatsishvili, who was found dead at his Surrey mansion in England on 12 February 2008.

Former official of the Constitutional Security Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs under the United National Movement government G.M. has been detained, while two other former top figures of the same agency L.K. and R.Sh have been charged for plotting murder and abuse of authority.

The Prosecutor's Office said that they seized two recordings in 2016 which included conversations regarding the plotting of the murder of Patarkatsishvili, who had to flee Georgia in 2007 as he was accused of plotting a coup (*Agenda.ge, October 17, 2018*).

#### **12. Mirza Subeliani talks about liquidation of Mikheil Saakashvili in new secret recording**

Supposedly Mirza Subeliani talks about the liquidation of former Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili with Georgian Dream MP Viktor Japaridze and the trustee of the former high-ranking official of the Prosecutor's Office, Davit Tsukhishvili, in another secret recording released by Rustavi 2.

"Let me kill Misha. I will need 3-4 months to prepare for it.. I will not use a weapon at all. I have two options: either to kill him or to make a deal with him. But, I don't want to make a deal with him, I am not attracted by his proposals", Subeliani says (*IPN.ge, October 17, 2018*).

### **13. Rustavi 2 Director General claims Security Service is preparing new recording of conversation between him and Mikheil Saakashvili**

"I wrote on October 14 that Victor Japaridze was in prison to make a fake record published later by the prosecutor's office. There is nothing strange about it. We have sources everywhere and these sources provide information instantly. Accordingly, we now know for example that the State Security Service is preparing a new recording of the telephone conversation between me and Mikheil Saakashvili. Some combination of different conversations, there're added voices , etc. We have been talking about this too long. I do not care at all. Yes, I speak to Mikheil Saakashvili.

"Yes, I speak to Gigi Ugulava Yes, I talk to Shalva Natelashvili Yes, I spoke to Burchuladze when he was in politics, Irakli Alasania, etc. I talk to everyone with whom I think it is necessary. I do not plan any crime, I have my political sympathies and antipath. I have my views regarding Georgia's development, "- said Gvaramia (*Rustavi 2, October 17, 2018*).

## **❖ Economy and Social Affairs**

### **14. Georgian petrol stations will be inspected for fuel quality**

Around 80 filling stations around Georgia will be inspected in Georgia in November to determine the quality of fuel they sell, Neli Korkotadze, deputy head of the Environment Protection Supervision Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment stated today.

She said that department employees will arrive at the stations without advanced notice and collect about 240 fuel samples.

We will check whether the quality of fuel is in line with the current legislation in the field," Korkotadze said.

She stated that the import of the fuel which fails to meet mandatory standards is subject to fines of up to 10,000 GEL, while the sale of such fuel is subject to fines of 8,000 GEL (*Agenda.ge, October 16, 2018*).

### **15. Over 5 mln GEL to be spent on repairing electricity lines in Georgia**

Energy company Energo-Pro Georgia is planning to invest 5,234,000 GEL in restoring high voltage electricity lines in Georgia.

So far, the company has already completed the rehabilitation of three, 110 kV high voltage lines - Katskhi, Moashi and Marabda 2. As a result of the works, the reliability and quality of electricity supply has increased significantly to people living in Chiatura, Sachkhere, Lentekhi and Mestia.

As for Marabda 2, it will be put into operation by the end of November and will provide a more reliable electricity supply to the city of Rustavi (*Agenda.ge, October 17, 2018*).

### **16. Romanian airline launches direct flights between Bucharest and Tbilisi**

TAROM, Romania’s flag carrier and oldest operating airline, will soon launch scheduled flights between Romania’s capital of Bucharest and Georgia’s capital of Tbilisi, announced the Georgian Civil Aviation Agency.

Flights between the two cities will be launched on October 31 and will continue until March 30, 2019. TAROM airlines will operate flights two times per week. Tickets for the new route are already on sale, with prices starting from 440 GEL (*Agenda.ge, October 16, 2018*).

## ❖ Sports and Culture

### 17. Georgia defeats Latvia to qualify for UEFA Nations League play-offs

The Georgian national football team has qualified for the play-off stage of the newly launched UEFA Nations League after winning their fourth match in their group at the tournament.

Managed by Vladimir Weiss, the team tops Group 1 of League D with four wins and 12 points after defeating Latvia on Tuesday.

The match saw Jaba Kankava, Vako Gvilia and Giorgi Chakvetadze score a goal each to see off the hosts in Riga, and earning passage to the play-off round for the team (*Agenda.ge, October 17, 2018*).

## Additional Information

**September 18, 2018**  
**OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES**

1 USD - 2.6838 GEL	1 GBP - 3.5265 GEL	100 RUB - 4.0978 GEL
1 EUR - 3.1022 GEL	1 TRY - 0.4713 GEL	100 JPY - 2.3911 GEL

Thursday 18 October	Friday 19 October	Saturday 20 October	Sunday 21 October	Monday 22 October
				
11° 21°	10° 20°	12° 22°	12° 23°	13° 23°

- **Movie Events - English Sessions - [Tickets](#)**
- **Friends of Museum (Membership to access Georgian National Museums For free of charge after one payment) - [Membership](#)**
- **Marjanishvili Theatre – [Events and Tickets](#)**
- **Rustaveli Theatre - [Events and Tickets](#)**
- **Opera and Ballet – [Events and Tickets](#)**
- **Concerts – [Events and Tickets](#)**
- **Sports – [Events and Tickets](#)**