

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

November 26-December 2

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❖ Occupied Regions

1. New grant programme to encourage trade across dividing lines

A new grant programme 'Produce for a Better Future' will be launched in Georgia from January 1, 2019 within the peace initiative 'A Step to a Better Future' in order to encourage trade across the dividing lines.

The initiative promotes trade relations in such a way as to enhance economic relations across dividing lines, develop new opportunities and access to both internal and external markets. Also, the new ways and opportunities for economic benefits for the population of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region", read the press release published by the Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality.

The new programme ensures support for joint production and partnership projects on both sides of the dividing lines.

The beneficiary of the programme may be a person or a registered entrepreneur, who lives in the occupied territories of Abkhazia or Tskhinvali region, as well as a person from territory controlled by the government of Georgia.

The maximum amount of financing is defined:

- Up to 7,000 GEL for one beneficiary who must be/work in the occupied territories of Georgia;
- Up to 15,000 GEL for beneficiaries group, which consists of two beneficiaries, one beneficiary should be/work in the occupied territories of Georgia;
- Up to 20,000 GEL for beneficiaries group consisting of three beneficiaries, including at least one beneficiary to be/work in Georgia's controlled territory;
- Up to 35,000 GEL for beneficiaries group consisting of four or more beneficiaries, including at least one beneficiary to be/work in the territory controlled by Georgia (*Agenda.ge, November 27, 2018*).

2. Occupants prevent 85-year-old Georgian man from crossing occupation line to vote

Russia-controlled so-called border guards are standing in front of the home of 85-year-old Georgian citizen Data Vanishvili to prevent him from voting in the Georgian presidential election runoff. Vanishvili managed to cross the occupation line and vote in the first round of elections on 28 October (*Agenda.ge, November 28, 2018*).

❖ Foreign Affairs

3. Georgia calls attack on Ukrainian navy vessels by Russia alarming

Zalkaliani has already met with Ukrainian Ambassador to Georgia Ihor Dolhov, who thanked Georgia for “such a supportive statement,” and hoped that the international community would give a relevant assessment to the “open aggression against Ukraine (*Agenda.ge, November 26, 2018*).

4. Georgia-Germany sign first military deal for Georgian NATO integration

Georgian and German defence ministers have signed a deal which for the first time in the history of Georgian-German military cooperation affirms Germany’s support for Georgia’s NATO integration and its commitment to provide “maximal assistance” for the country to achieve its goal of joining the alliance.

The agreement was signed yesterday in Berlin by Georgian Defence Minister Levan Izoria and his German counterpart Ursula von der Leyen.

Izoria stated that the agreement highlights the priorities for the countries in the defence and security fields (*Agenda.ge, November 27, 2018*).

5. Georgian president-elect Zurabishvili: Russia has to be held accountable for its aggression in Georgia, Ukraine [VIDEO]

Georgian President-elect Salome Zurabishvili had told the international media that Russia has to be held accountable for its aggression in Georgia and Ukraine.

She told Israeli i24NEWS that the international community should take active steps to terminate Russia’s occupation of Georgian and Ukrainian territories as the two countries should not live under permanent threat (*Agenda.ge, November 30, 2018*).

6. Tokyo hosts exhibition dedicated to 100th anniversary of Georgian independence

The University of Tokyo has held an exhibition dedicated to the 100th anniversary of Georgian independence. The exhibition was organised by the National Archives of Georgia and the University of Tokyo.

The exhibition presents the main events of 1918-1921, during which Georgia enjoyed a brief period of independence, in addition to the steps the country took in the 20th century to establish democratic values and principles (*Agenda.ge, December 1, 2018*).

❖ Internal Affairs

7. New president to be inaugurated in mid-December

The inauguration ceremony of the fifth president of Georgia will be held on 16 December based on the Georgian Constitution.

The Constitution reads that the ceremony must be held on the third Sunday after holding elections. The current president of Georgia will officially end his term on inauguration day (*Agenda.ge, November 27, 2018*).

8. Personal Data Protection Inspector shows interest in lists held by political party coordinators

The Georgian Personal Data Protection Inspector’s Office has called upon observers to provide evidence and any information they have regarding election-related lists with photos which are held by political party coordinators near polling stations.

The Georgian media reports that the lists are being used by the coordinators to mark whether certain party supporters appeared or not to vote.

The election list and the information which is included in the list are personal information and the issue needs to be studied. It should be clarified what type of lists these are and how the personal data of the people in the lists is being used,” the office of the Personal Data Protection Inspector says (*Agenda.ge, November 28, 2018*).

9. Parliament speaker calls on opposition not to try to create ‘artificially aggressive environment’ on election day

Georgian Parliament Speaker Irakli Kobakhidze has called upon the United National Movement opposition and the “party affiliated” Rustavi 2 private broadcaster not to try to create an “artificially aggressive environment” on election day.

Kobakhidze says that the opposition and the TV channel are trying to portray the presidential election runoff as being conducted in an aggressive environment.

He says that the elections are ongoing “without any genuine violations,” and that the turnout for 3 pm was “an unprecedented high” (*Agenda.ge, November 28, 2018*).

10. Agitation, voting rules violations - incidents reported by election observers

Public Movement Multinational Georgia (PMMG) observers have reported 41 incidents in the election process as of 21:00 on November 28.

Four complaints have been filed by the observers themselves in total. The observers have revealed one incident of agitation at a polling station, one attempt of voting without presenting proper documentation and one case of pre-made signature in the voters’ list.

The incident of agitation was reported from Marneuli election district during the voting process.

“The following parties have been involved in agitation process: appointed members of the precinct election commission representing United National Movement and Georgian Dream, appointed representatives by the underlined two political subjects as well as the ordinary voters in the polling station. The incident was removed as a result of verbal objection raised by the observers,” PMMG said (*Agenda.ge, November 28, 2018*).

11. Central Election Commission releases final results of presidential elections

The Georgian Central Election Commission has released the final results of the presidential elections. The commission has stated that 100 per cent of votes have been counted.

The Georgian Dream ruling party endorsed presidential candidate Salome Zurbishvili received 59.52 per cent of votes. The opposition candidate Grigol Vashadze received 40.48 per cent of votes. Zurbishvili received 1,147,627 votes, while Vashadze-780,633 (*Agenda.ge, November 28, 2018*).

12. President Margvelashvili evaluates elections, congratulates successor

Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili has evaluated the 28 November presidential elections by saying that the country “should not conduct elections in the manner as they were conducted yesterday.”

Through observing the elections and based on the assessments of observing organizations the democratic level of conducting the elections in the runoff has been drastically decreased. Elections conducted with the same standard should not take place in the future,” Margvelashvili said (*Agenda.ge, November 28, 2018*).

13. France, Ukraine, Lithuania and Estonia congratulate Salome Zurbishvili on winning presidential elections

France is ready to cooperate with Georgia's newly elected president Salome Zourabichvili to strengthen relations between the two countries, the French Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

France is ready to work with Madame Zourabichvili to further strengthen the excellent and old relationship between our two countries. The new president will be able to count on our determination to continue to act in favour of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders," read the statement.

France extends its most sincere congratulations to her and wishes her every success in the performance of her duties", read the statement (*Agenda.ge, November 28, 2018*).

14. US looking forward to working with Georgian president-elect Zourabichvili

The US government is looking forward to working with Georgian President-elect Salome Zourabichvili, Robert Palladino, deputy spokesperson of the US Department of State said yesterday.

"I would say the United States looks forward to working with President-elect Salome Zourabichvili and continuing our close partnership with Georgia on a range of important bilateral and regional issues, including our robust security cooperation and Georgia's contributions to NATO's Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan," Palladino told the media.

15. US embassy evaluates Georgian elections, congratulates president-elect

The US embassy in Georgia has congratulated Georgian president-elect Salome Zourabichvili on her victory and made the assessments of the 28 November elections.

The embassy wrote that elections are fundamental to democracy, and in that spirit, they welcomed the assessment by the OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission that Georgian presidential runoff was "competitive and that candidates were able to campaign freely" (*IPN.GE, November 30, 2018*).

16. Foreign leaders, states send kind wishes to Georgian president-elect

Foreign leaders and countries continue to congratulate Georgian President-elect Salome Zourabichvili on her victory.

Maiía Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, president of the 73rd Session of the UN General Assembly, tweeted that she is always happy to the growing roles of women in power.

President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko stated that he waited for further enhancement of the two countries' relations under the new president.

The UK Foreign Minister Sir Alan Duncan congratulated Zourabichvili on her victory and welcomed her determination to bring society together.

Congratulations to Salome #Zourabichvili! Your election as the first female president of #Georgia is, indeed, a historic event and I sincerely wish that your term of office will be marked by continuous uplift and prosperity in the history of Georgia" – said Armenian President Pashinian.

Turkey welcomed the successful conduct of the second round of the presidential elections in Georgia and hoped the results of the elections will be beneficial for the people of Georgia (*Agenda.ge, November 30, 2018*).

17. EU ambassador congratulates Georgian president-elect, evaluates elections

EU Ambassador to Georgia Carl Hartzell has extended his congratulations to Salome Zourabichvili on her election as president of Georgia, and stated that he is looking forward to cooperate closely with her in the future.

We also congratulate the people of Georgia for having exercised their right to vote in a calm and peaceful manner.

We welcome the assessment by the International Election Observation mission that the elections were competitive and candidates were able to campaign freely. We also note the IEOM's assessment that the process was undermined by the undue advantage enjoyed by one side and the negative character of the campaign on both sides," Hartzell said (*Agenda.ge, November 30, 2018*).

18. Salome Zurabishvili to relocate Presidential Residence from Avlabari to Orbeliani Palace

Georgia's newly elected president Salome Zurabishvili is going to relocate the presidential residence from the Presidential Palace in Tbilisi's Avlabari district to an alternative location on Atoneli Street. This issue was even included in Zurabishvili's election programme and today Zurabishvili stated that Orbeliani Palace which is located on Atoneli Street, is more European in style and appropriate for the presidential palace.

As Baratashvilis and Orbelianis were my ancestors it is absolutely suitable for me to move the presidential residence there", said Zurabishvili (*IPN.GE, November 29, 2018*).

19. International Republican Institute: political parties should accept election results

The President of the International Republican Institute (IRI) Daniel Twining recommends political powers in Georgia to start preparing for the 2020 parliamentary elections instead of organising protest rallies.

In an interview with the Georgian Bureau of Voice of America he said that the IRI is going to continue working with local political parties to make sure their campaigns are more socially oriented and proactive (*IPN.GE, December 1, 2018*).

20. Opposition protests election results

The Strength in Unity opposition coalition does not recognise the results of the elections held on November 28 and demands snap parliamentary elections.

The Georgian Dream ruling party endorsed presidential candidate Salome Zurabishvili received 59.52 per cent of the vote and became the first woman president elected in Georgia and the region.

Opposition coalition candidate Grigol Vashadze was supported by 40.48 per cent of voters.

"We do not recognise these elections and its results. Georgia does not have a president, Bidzina Ivanishvili has a president," Grigol Vashadze said at a meeting with supporters in Tbilisi last night.

The opposition coalition has demanded earlier parliamentary elections and announced a protest rally on Sunday on Rustaveli avenue in Tbilisi (*Rustavi 2, November 29, 2018*).

21. PM on planned opposition rally: If anyone acts out, we will act within law

Georgian Prime Minister has responded to a planned opposition rally on Sunday and stated that if anyone at the manifestation tries to create destabilization, they will be held accountable within the law.

"Everyone has the right of expression and the right is protected by the constitution. However, at the same time, if anyone tries to act out, we will act within the law.

Two million Georgian voters participated in the presidential elections and everyone should respect the choice of the Georgian people. We will not allow for revolutionary scenarios or confrontations. The elections are over and we should return to normal, everyday life, as much is to be done and many challenges need to be overcome," Bakhtadze said (*IPN.GE, November 29, 2018*).

22. Opposition coalition protesting election result

Opposition coalition Strength in Unity is protesting the results of the Georgian presidential election which resulted in the victory of pro-government candidate Salome Zurabishvili on Rustaveli Avenue.

The number of opposition supporters at today's rally has been a hot discussion topic among social media users in Georgia. Agenda.ge's reporters have estimated the number of people using classical method based on metrics of the square of the area and the density of the crowd. Through our calculations, we believe that the number of supporters gathered at today's rally is up to 8,000.

UNM has demanded early parliamentary elections held through proportional model. The date of ultimatum expires on December 16, on the day of inauguration (*IPN.GE, Rustavi 2, December 2, 2018*).

23. MIA arrests seven Ukrainian citizens and one Georgian for firearms possession

The Ministry of Internal Affairs has confirmed the arrest of seven Ukrainians for the illegal purchase and possession of firearms, ammunition, explosives and explosive substances.

The detainees were arrested this morning in the hotels Guru and Alliance, where Beretta and Makarov firearms were discovered, in addition to automatic handmade firearms and various kinds of ammunition.

The MIA said the seven individuals arrived in Georgia on November 27 and investigators are trying to identify the goal of their visit.

Georgian citizen Luka Tchkheta is among the detainees. He has been fighting in Donbas for the last few years, he used to be a servicemen in Afghanistan. His family said he came in Tbilisi to attend the opposition protest rally. Father of Tchkheta says that the weapon was planted to his son by security services (*IPN.GE, Rustavi 2, December 2, 2018*).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

24. 11,000 families receive natural gas in Georgia's mountainous Adjara

The first stage of the project for supplying natural gas to Georgia's highland Adjara has been completed successfully and the Prime Minister of Georgia Mamuka Bakhtadze ignited a fire from the main pipeline to mark the completion of the project.

"This project is a very important step of state magnitude, as it will enable us not only to avoid the reduction of population in mountainous Adjara, but on the contrary - it will let us increase it further and make this place more interesting for the development of tourism. This fascinating landscape we see now should become an all-year-round destination of recreation and natural gas supply is a prerequisite for this", said Bakhtadze (*Agenda.ge, November 26, 2018*).

25. EBRD offers €15 million for Tbilisi Solid Waste Project

The 'Tbilisi Solid Waste Project', which has a total estimated cost of €15 million, will require the procurement of the following goods, works and services:

- Waste collecting vehicles (rear loaded compactor vehicles);
- Upgrading existing waste transfer station;
- Rehabilitation of landfill leachate system.

So far the EBRD has financed over 200 projects in Georgia, worth about €3 billion (*Agenda.ge, November 27, 2018*).

26. 36 infrastructural projects worth 51 mln GEL planned for Lanchkhuti, Georgia

Lanchkhuti, a western Georgian town in Guria region, will welcome 36 infrastructural projects, worth 51 million GEL in 2019, announces the Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development.

Two water supply projects will be implemented in the municipality, new schools will be built in the villages of Chochkhata and Lesa, existing schools will be renovated, new kindergartens will be built in the villages of Tabaneti, Khajalia and Atsana, serving 400 children.

Road infrastructure is also planned to be developed: nine projects will be implemented to improve road infrastructure and about 45 million GEL will be spent on it in the municipality (*Agenda.ge, November 27, 2018*).

27. New programme offers free education to students from Georgia's occupied regions

Georgia is launching a new educational programme for young people living in its breakaway regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali (South Ossetia), announces the Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality.

The pilot version of the program will be launched from February 2019 within the new peace initiative 'A Step to a Better Future' and the full course will come into force from September of the same year.

At the first stage 100 applicants to be trained at the training centres that will be opened at the Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University and at Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi. The studies will be free of charge, moreover the applicants will receive the stipend of 150 GEL (*Agenda.ge, November 30, 2019*).

28. Georgia hosting first Tbilisi International Night Time Economy Forum

Georgia's capital of Tbilisi is hosting the first Tbilisi International Night Time Economy Forum (TINTEF), which will be held today and tomorrow.

The heads of night-time economies of nine countries and experts of urban development and culture management are participating in the forum to adopt a broad dialogue on the role of urban planning and wise management in the development of sustainable night-time economies.

The forum aims to help Tbilisi City Hall and local authorities to find ways to activate certain spaces in Tbilisi and encourage growth of a local culture, engage visitors in the cultural life of the city and change perceptions of Tbilisi at night (*Agenda.ge, November 30, 2019*).

29. October 2018: Georgian economy grows 6.7%

The Georgian economy grew 5.7% year-on-year in the first 10 months of 2018, announces the National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat).

The estimated real gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate in October 2018 was equal to 6.7% year-on-year, Geostat said.

"Identifying the main GDP growth trends in October, Deputy Economy Minister Ekaterine Mikabidze said that estimated real growth compared to the same period of the previous year was posted in manufacturing, trade and construction.

In the reporting period export of goods has increased by 15% and totalled \$303 million. Revenues from tourism also increased by 14.1% and reached \$246 million. Georgia received \$116 million in remittances. Turnover of enterprises registered in Georgia increased by 13.9% compared to the same month in 2017. All these factors have a positive impact on economic growth", said Mikabidze (*Bpn.ge, November 30, 2019*).

30. Government of Japan provides Georgian Emergency Management Service with fire engine

The government of Japan has provided the Emergency Management Service of Georgia with a second-hand fire engine.

The fire engine was designated for the Isani-Samgori area, but can be quickly transported to the rest of Tbilisi in emergency situations.

Official data show 3-4 thousand fire incidents occur every year in Tbilisi, approximately 10% of them take place in multi-story residential buildings. Therefore, high-grade fire equipment is essential for the Emergency Management Service of Georgia.

The project was organised within the framework of the “Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects”. The funding of the Embassy of Japan for this project is 99,733 USD (*Agenda.ge, November 30, 2018*).

❖ Sports and Culture

31. Niko Pirosmani painting sold for highest bid at Sotheby’s Auction

A painting by Georgia’s foremost self-taught artist Niko Pirosmani has been sold at the Sotheby’s Auction House for over two million pounds, the highest price for works by the early 20th century painter.

Georgian Woman Wearing a Lechaki, a work by Pirosmani (1862-1918) was sold at the auction earlier today in London.

It was obtained by an unnamed buyer for 2.23 million pounds, with a starting estimate between 500.000-700.000 GBP (*Agenda.ge, November 27, 2018*).

Additional Information

December 3, 2018
OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

1 USD - 2.6744 GEL	1 GBP - 3.4112 GEL	100 RUB - 4.0063 GEL
1 EUR - 3.0400 GEL	1 TRY - 0.5159 GEL	100 JPY - 2.3557 GEL

Monday 3 December	Tuesday 4 December	Wednesday 5 December	Thursday 6 December	Friday 7 December
				
5° 10°	4° 11°	5° 11°	5° 14°	4° 12°

- **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](#)**