

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

October 10-14

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Date: **October 15, 2019**

❖ Foreign Affairs

1. Giorgi Gakharia: Aliyev said that history and geography bind us together—yes, they do bind us, geography does not divide friends and partners, but binds them together

"We all remember that, unfortunately, there are certain sections of the Georgia-Azerbaijan border that have not yet been demarcated, this is our post-Soviet legacy, and this problem has not been resolved for 25 years. The President of Azerbaijan said that history and geography bind us together—yes, they do bind us, because geography does not divide friends and partners, but binds them together", – Prime Minister said (1TV, October 10, 2019).

2. Salome Zurbishvili welcomes outcome of Prime Minister's visit to Azerbaijan

Georgian President Salome Zurbishvili welcomes the outcome of the visit of Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia to Azerbaijan.

"Taking into account the national interests and history of the two countries, opening the churches in the Davit Gareji Monastery for the Georgian community is another step forward in resolving the issues related to Davit Gareji complex and the entire border demarcation.

Azerbaijan is our strategic partner and I am convinced that as a result of joint efforts, the two countries will find solutions that are in the best interests of two countries", – the statement of Georgian President reads (1TV, October 10, 2019).

3. Ilham Aliyev: Azerbaijan and Georgia are the most important and closest partners today

Azerbaijan and Georgia are the most important and closest partners today, – President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev wrote about it on his Twitter page.

"Azerbaijan and Georgia, having successfully developed mutual relations during the years of independence, are the most important and closest partners today" – stated President of Azerbaijan.

The meeting between the Prime Minister of Georgia Giorgi Gakharia and President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev was held within the visit of Georgian PM to Azerbaijan (1TV, October 11, 2019).

4. Archil Talakvadze: We have further agreements on Davit Gareji issue ahead

"It's very good that clergymen are allowed to enter the Davit Gareji complex, we have further agreements ahead," – Parliament Speaker Archil Talakvadze told reporters.

Archil Talakvadze positively evaluated the visit of Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia to Azerbaijan and said that the visit has concrete results (1TV, October 11, 2019).

5. Number of Georgian asylum seekers in Denmark decreased three times

According to data by the Immigration Service of Denmark, in January-August of this year, 81 applications were submitted by Georgian citizens, while in the same period of the last year the number of applications was 264.

In 2018, the number of asylum seekers in Denmark from Georgia was 402. After Eritrea and Syria, Georgia was on the third place. However, no Georgian citizen received asylum in Denmark.

The statistics by the years is as follows: 2014 – 111 applications; 2015 – 100; 2016 – 73; 2017 – 76; 2018 – 402; 2019 (January-August) – 81 (*1TV, October 11, 2019*).

6. Turkish attack on Northern Syria protested in Georgia

Several Georgians gathered to protest Turkish actions in northern Syria in front of the Embassy of Turkey in Georgia. Participants of the rally were holding banners calling "No War in Northern Syria" and "No to Turkish Imperialism. The demonstration was organized by the leader of Labour Party Shalva Natelashvili "We demand immediate ceasefire from the Turkish Government and demilitarize Kurdish regions of Syria, who played huge role in terms of defeating ISIS." – addressed Natelashvili (*TV Imedi, October 14, 2019*).

7. Greece's Holy Synod recognizes autonomy of Church of Ukraine

The Holy Synod of the Church of Greece has recognized the autonomy of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, in line with a request by the Istanbul-based Ecumenical Patriarch Vartholomaios, Kathimerini learned on Saturday.

Following the decision by the synod, which is comprised of Greece's 80 bishops, Greece's Archbishop Ieronymos will henceforth mention his Ukrainian counterpart Epifanios during religious services along with other regional Orthodox leaders and he will be regarded as a member of the Orthodox Church's family (*1TV, October 12, 2019*).

8. Metropolitan Ananias Japaridze: According to Diptych, Alexandria, Antioch, etc. must first recognize...and then our turn will probably come

"We are in Diptych, and according to Diptych, Alexandria, Antioch, etc. must first recognize. And then our turn will probably come. We always support autocephaly for the Church of Ukraine. A nation, the state has the right to have autocephaly and it will definitely have. This is a process, which proceeds. It doesn't happen in a day or two. Restoring our autocephaly took 100 years, and another 50 years for recognition by Russia and then by the World Patriarchate. This is a process that can last not one or two years, but decades. The main thing is that the Ukrainian people want it" – Metropolitan said (*1TV, October 13, 2019*).

9. Sophio Katsarava: NATO has reiterated its full support for Georgia's security and its Euro-Atlantic integration

NATO has reiterated its full support for Georgia's security and its integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, – Sophio Katsarava Chairperson of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Parliament of Georgia assessed today's sitting of the Policy Committee held in the sideline of the 65th session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

"The committee work has been resumed by discussion. NATO-Russia relations and Georgia in this context has been actively represented. The issue of Georgia and Ukraine has been highlighted countless times, in the NATO-Russia relations context. NATO has reiterated its full support for Georgia in terms of security as

well as Euro-Atlantic integration. The delegates voted and I hope that these documents will be approved at the plenary session as well," -Katsarava said (*ITV, October 13, 2019*).

10. Slovenian delegation member asks Stoltenberg: When will we see Georgia as a full member of NATO

At the NATO Parliamentary Assembly Plenary Session the Deputy Head of the Slovenian Delegation Matej Tonin asked NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg the following question – "When will we see Georgia as a full member of NATO".

As Tonin noted, the Slovenian delegation supports NATO enlargement and would like to see Georgia as a full member of the Alliance.

"Speaking at the US Congress in March 2019, you said that NATO is not only the longest-lasting alliance in history, but this is the most successful one in history. The Slovenian delegation totally agrees with you. We are satisfied that Montenegro is already in and Northern Macedonia is almost in the Alliance. The Slovenian delegation supports NATO enlargement and would like to see Georgia as a part of NATO, this country is the great partner and contributor to our missions. Secretary General, when will we see Georgia as a full member of NATO? " – Matej Tonin asked (*ITV, October 14, 2019*).

11. Jens Stoltenberg: Georgia will become NATO member, though timeline of this process not defined

"NATO's door remains open. We proved it by allowing Montenegro to join. Montenegro became a 29th member of Alliance two years ago and soon Northern Macedonia will become the 30th member of Alliance. So for the past two years, we have proven that NATO's door remains open. We have also clearly stated many times at different NATO summits that Georgia will become a NATO member, but we have no timeline for this process. We support Georgia's efforts to modernize and strengthen its security and defense institutions to meet NATO standards. So this is an issue we are working on together with Georgia. It is also important to remember that even without membership, we have seen more NATO in Georgia – we have a joint training and evaluation center in Georgia, we have more exercises, we have more NATO presence in Georgia than we ever have before. This is good for Georgia and good for NATO. So, without full membership, we have a very strong partnership with Georgia", – Stoltenberg stated (*ITV, October 14, 2019*).

❖ Internal Affairs

12. Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development set to resign

Based on the reliable source, TV Pirveli is releasing information that the first governmental change is planned by Gakharia. Reportedly, PM is not satisfied with the work of Natia Turnava, Minister of Economy and she will be replaced by Nino Javakhaze, who is considered as the favourite of Gakharia since he took the post of the Minister of Economy. She was Gakharia's Deputy Minister in both of the previously occupied positions (Minister of Economy and Minister of Interior).

Former member of Georgian Dream, Chichinadze is saying Turnava never worked as an independent Minister of Economy she was implementing demands of certain business groups. "She was never trusted by Gakharia, actually the PM knew that she was loyal to Vano Chkhartishvili (Georgian businessmen with estimated wealth around 100M\$), therefore he is planning to change her." – said Chichinadze (*TV Pirveli, October 14, 2019*).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

13. Georgia-Azerbaijan Commission meeting on Economic Cooperation to be held in November

Azerbaijan and Georgia are strong economic partners, – Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia said when summarizing his recent visit to Azerbaijan at today's Cabinet meeting.

"Azerbaijan and Georgia are strong economic partners enjoying mutual trust, and their cooperation in the areas of energy carriers and transport is acquiring international importance. In addition, we discussed such important fields of economic cooperation as trade, transport, and bilateral investments, and we also defined particular steps further to deepen this cooperation", – the Prime Minister said (*1TV, October 10, 2019*).

14. Passengers flow at Kutaisi International Airport increased by almost 40%

The passengers flow at the Kutaisi Davit Aghmashenebeli International Airport has been increased by almost 40 % in January-September this year.

Based on the data of the Civil Aviation Agency, Tbilisi International Airport served 629 618 passengers during the first 9 months of the year, which is 179 201 more than in the nine-month period of 2018. The passenger flow has increased by 40% at Kutaisi International Airport.

The suspension of direct flights from Russia to Georgia after July 8 does not affect Kutaisi airport, as flights from the airport are mainly to EU countries (*1TV, October 10, 2019*).

15. Georgia among Europe's top twenty in terms of Control of Corruption and Regulatory Quality

The World Bank has published another report, "Worldwide Governance Indicators" in which Georgia is among Europe's top twenty among 189 countries in terms of Control of Corruption and Regulatory Quality, with regard to Government Effectiveness Georgia has hit its historic highs. Ministry of Finance of Georgia reported in this regard.

According to the agency, in assessing the Control of Corruption, the World Bank relied on 33 various large-scale studies and qualified expertise of leading world research centers, among which is the results of a detailed study of the Global Competitiveness Report of the World Economic Forum. According to the report, Georgia is among Europe's top twenty in terms of Control of Corruption and Regulatory Quality.

With regard to corruption control, Georgia received 67 percent out of 100 percent total rating scale, ranked 31st in the world and moved up to 16th in Europe's top twenty (*1TV, October 10, 2019*).

16. The National Interest: Georgia Deserves a Free Trade Agreement with America

Georgia Deserves a Free Trade Agreement with America, – The National Interest published an [article](#) under this title. As the article notes, Tbilisi has proven that it deserves U.S. commitment and a stronger alliance. “Eleven years ago, Russia invaded Georgia’s Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions, instigating a brutal, five-day war. Today, Russia occupies 20 percent of Georgia and continues to encroach on Georgian territory via a campaign of “creeping annexation”.

Yet, despite Russia’s malign influence, Georgia has made tremendous progress over the past decade. The government has continued its march toward greater integration with the West, and it has made remarkable advances in liberalizing the Georgian economy (*nationalinterest.org, October 10, 2019*).

17. The Independent: Mestia could easily have come straight out of a Game of Thrones set

Why Georgia is the ultimate ski destination for thrillseekers, – British edition Independent has published an [article](#) under this title.

“If deep powder, mountain panoramas and empty slopes are your idea of a good ski holiday, put Georgia on your bucket list”, says the author of this article.

“Driving up the snowbound dirt road to Tetnuldi ski area in Georgia’s Caucasus Mountains is like taking your 4WD vehicle back in time. Our base in the town of Mestia could easily have come straight out of a Game of Thrones set, with its ancient stone buildings and Svan towers – defensive structures that date back as far as the 12th or 13th centuries – giving a medieval feel to the place. Yet Tetnuldi ski resort, 15km to the east, is at the forefront of the modern freeride scene in Georgia (*independent.co.uk, October 11, 2019*).

18. Statistics on international visitors in September

According to data published by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, in September, the number of visitors arriving in Georgia for 24 hours or more, amounts to 420 390, which is 1.9 percent less than in the same period of the past year.

According to the Ministry, the total number of foreign visitors in September is 839 358, which is 3% more than in the same period of the last year (*ITV, October 11, 2019*).

19. Standard&Poor’s increases Georgia’s sovereign credit rating to “BB”

The international rating company Standard&Poor’s (S&P) increased the sovereign credit rating of Georgia to “BB” “Stable.” This is the first improvement after 2011 when the Standard & Poor’s credit rating for Georgia stood at BB- with “a stable outlook.”

The report published by the rating company says that despite foreign and regional challenges, Georgia showed high economic growth in comparison to its neighbors and reached about 4% in 2015-2018.

The company prognosticates positive evaluation for the future since it believes that the Georgian government’s policy will be directed toward diversification of export and foreign investments as well as toward infrastructure development.

The rating company expects the increase of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at 4.5% this year. The average growth in 2019-2022 will be 4% (*ITV, October, 12, 2019*).

20. Finance Minister commented about Georgia’s rating of Standard & Poor’s

“The company says that Georgia will have high economic growth in comparison to its neighbors and the viewpoint coincides with the standpoint of the International Monetary Fund. The company, in general,

positively evaluates the institutional environment and underlines that the government was changed through a peaceful environment. This is another sign of how important political stability and peace are important in the country," Machavariani said (*ITV, October 12, 2019*).

21. Minister of Economy - Georgia's improved sovereign credit rating is a very clear recognition of our successful economic reforms

Improvement of Georgia's sovereign credit rating by the leading rating agency Standard & Poor's, which happened for the first time since 2011, is a very clear recognition of the successful economic reforms carried out by our government over the years, – said Natia Turnava, Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development.

Turnava said the above was also a recognition that Georgia's economy was developing rapidly and steadily across the region. "If we look at the dynamics of these ratings in the region, we will see that no other country in the region has such a clear improvement," she said (*ITV, October 12, 2019*).

22. Carl Hartzell – Tea is a trademark of Guria. I hope it will be exported to international markets including to Europe

Carl Hartzell, Ambassador of the European Union to Georgia visited a cooperative of tea plantation supported by the European Union in Nagomari village, Ozurgeti Municipality of western Guria region.

Cooperative "Nagomari" was established in December of 2015. Within the framework of ENPARD Program, the cooperative managed to buy the necessary equipment and expand the tea plantation onto 12 hectares of land territory.

About 25 hectares of tea plantation has been rehabilitated by the cooperative in the village that enables the enterprise to increase its production up to 12-13 tons (*ITV, October 12, 2019*).

23. Kids' clothes manufactured in Georgia exported to Japan

With the support of Produce in Georgia Program, kids' clothes manufactured by the company Eshvi Kids has been exported to Japan. The Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia reports.

Eshvi Kids established business ties with Japanese company Roherman at the international exhibition Pitti Bimbo. Roherman is one of the most famous network of shops not only in Japan but also throughout the USA.

The Pitti Bimbo Exhibition was held in Florence in June 2019. Eshvi Kids, as well as three other Georgian companies, was represented at the exhibition with the support of Produce in Georgia.

The state program Produce in Georgia is being implemented by the initiative of the Government of Georgia. The program aims at developing and supporting entrepreneurship, encouraging the creation of new enterprises and increasing export potential in the country (*ITV, October 14, 2019*).

Additional Information

October 15, 2019

OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

1 USD - 2.9701 GEL

1 GBP - 3.7328 GEL

100 RUB -4.6307 GEL


1 EUR - 3.2778 GEL

1 TRY - 0.5055 GEL

100 JPY - 2.7437 GEL


Tuesday 15 October	Wednesday 16 October	Thursday 17 October	Friday 18 October	Saturday 19 October
				
9° 23°	11° 26°	12° 23°	13° 26°	14° 24°

 **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](#)**