



WEEKLY NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

October 4-8, 2021

Compiled from various
media by:
Teona Macharashvili

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Ipsos exit polls commissioned by Mtavari Arkhi:

- Nika Melia - 40.8%.
- Kakha Kaladze - 40.2%.
- Giorgi Gakharia - 8.7%.

Only the Imedi TV commissioned exit polls say that there will be no need for the second round of elections in Tbilisi.

Source in English: Agenda.ge, [Exit Polls](#), October 2/2021

3. Second Round of Mayoral Elections Expected in 5 Big Cities: Tbilisi, Rustavi, Kutaisi, Poti, Batumi (on October 3)

A second round of mayoral elections are expected in all five big cities of Georgia, including Tbilisi, Rustavi, Kutaisi, Poti, Batumi - as none of the candidates received at least 50% + 1 of the vote. Municipal elections are held in Georgia per a mixed electoral system. Voters have to fill three ballot papers: the first ballot paper is for mayoral candidates (which are elected per a 50%+1 system). The winner is the candidate who will receive at least 50%+1 of the vote, otherwise a second round of elections will be held). The second ballot paper is for majoritarian candidates in city assemblies (The winner must receive more than 40 per cent of votes in the first round of elections to win the race, otherwise a second round of elections will be held). The third ballot paper is for parties - they will need at least 2.5% of the vote to receive seats in Tbilisi City Assembly and 3% in other city assemblies across the country.

Source in English: Agenda.ge, [Second Round](#), October 3/2021

4. Former President Saakashvili's Detention and Related Post-Election Situation

TV Channel Alleges Saakashvili Entered Georgia Hidden in Truck on Ferryboat: Georgian former President Mikheil Saakashvili allegedly entered Georgia's Black Sea port city of Poti via Ukrainian private company UkrFerry's boat *Vilnius* 'hidden in a truck,' the Georgian Public Broadcaster's (GPB) weekly analytical program New Week reports. The GPB says Saakashvili set foot in Georgia on September 29 at nine p.m. via boat which departed from the trading port of Chernomorsk in the Odessa region. Georgian Foreign Minister David Zalkaliani stated that Mikheil Saakashvili may have illegally crossed the Ukrainian border as the Ukrainian side did not confirm the official crossing of the border to the Georgian government.

UNM-Organized Protest to Release Saakashvili: Opposition United National Movement (UNM) MP Levan Khabeishvili has announced a 'large-scale' demonstration to release recently detained Georgian former president Mikheil Saakashvili and called on the public to join. Khabeishvili told the local online media outlet Netgazeti.ge that the main demand of the protesters will be the release of



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Source in English: [Agenda.ge](https://agenda.ge),
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Saakashvili and the appointment of snap parliamentary elections. The UNM and their supporters held a protest rally in front of the Rustavi No.12 prison in support of ex-president Saakashvili where he is currently held. Saakashvili occasionally sends letters from prison where he thanks his supporters and urges them to fight for the opposition's victory in election run-offs which is scheduled for October 30.

Prime Minister Gharibashvili: Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili says that the 'most credible' account of why ex-president of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili returned to Georgia after eight years in political exile was his 'wish to overthrow the Georgian Dream government.' However, the 'operation was as poorly planned as Saakashvili's United National Movement (UNM) had run the country while in power.' Garibashvili stated that Saakashvili has only now realised the failure of his attempts and his psychological condition in No. 12 Rustavi prison is 'severe,' and he is asking for immediate release.

Parliament Speaker, Kuchava: Georgian Parliament Speaker Kakha Kuchava has stated that ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili cannot be a cause of discord between Georgia and Ukraine and called the two countries 'brotherly nations and strategic partners.' He noted Georgia and Ukraine will talk about the recently detained Saakashvili, however, Kuchava underscored that 'there will be no discussion of extradition' in this regard.

Member of EU Parliament Kaljurand: says that Georgians' refusal to take to the street after the country's ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili's recent calls was a 'signal' for her that the ex-president has lost his power. Kaljurand stated during yesterday's online conference organised by the Georgian Institute of Politics that Saakashvili violated the law when he returned to Georgia ahead of the October 2 municipal elections and that his return after eight years in political exile allegedly had an influence on the electoral process. Kaljurand also said that the EU will 'observe closely' all news around Saakashvili, who is currently serving a term for abuse of authority while in power and has been charged with several other cases.

Sources in English: [Agenda.ge](https://agenda.ge), [Illegal crossing of border](#), [UNM rally](#), [Kaljurand](#), [Kuchava](#), [Gharibashvili comments](#), October 6-7/2021.

5. Post-Election Assessments by International Community

EU Members of Parliament: MEPs Marina Kaljurand, Sven Mikser and Viola von Cramon-Taubadel, who observed the October 2 local municipal elections in Georgia, have stated that the country held a competitive and well-organised first round of local elections 'despite the extremely polarised political environment and challenging epidemiological situation.' The joint statement also reads that the recent elections in Georgia took place under 'a substantially improved legal framework.' However, it also says that the pre-election environment did not provide equal opportunities for various political parties and candidates, noting that 'main attention was diverted from local to national issues.'

US Senator Jeanne Shaheen says that she was happy that the Georgian October 2 municipal election



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day was 'well-administered and peaceful,' but added that elections are not only about election day itself. She told Voice of America that the Georgian government will not be able to avoid allegations of intimidation, vote-buying, pressure on candidates and voters during the elections. Shaheen says that the Georgian people deserve free and fair elections.

OSCE/ODIHR: mission, which has monitored the October 2 municipal elections in Georgia, says that the elections 'were generally well-administered but held against the backdrop of a protracted political crisis and characterised by hardened polarisation.' In its preliminary findings, OSCE/ODIHR says that contestants were able 'to campaign freely in a competitive environment' that was, however, 'marred by wide-spread and consistent allegations of intimidation, vote-buying, pressure on candidates and voters, and an unlevel playing field.' The report says that the election day was 'generally calm and orderly', with some isolated violent incidents. It stated that the election administration managed the technical aspects of the process efficiently and complied with legal deadlines, amid adjustments made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The report stated that the diverse media landscape was 'highly polarised and provided little analytical reporting and selective coverage, limiting the voters' ability to make an informed choice, and cases of intimidation and violence against journalists were of concern. It noted that 'significant imbalance in resources, insufficient oversight of campaign finances and an undue advantage of incumbency' further benefited the ruling party.

EU and US embassies: have assessed the October 2 municipal elections in Georgia and stated that the race was generally well administered, but was characterised by 'hardened polarisation.' They agreed with the preliminary findings of the OSCE/ODIHR and said that the contestants were able to campaign freely in a competitive environment, and that the election day proceeded in an orderly and transparent manner. The embassies regretted 'widespread and consistent allegations' of intimidation, vote-buying, pressure on candidates and voters and stated that a 'significant imbalance' in resources and an 'undue advantage of incumbency' further benefited the ruling party. The embassy stated that now it is time for Georgian parties to give up rivalry and 'urgently address the issues' that are most important to Georgia's citizens. The embassies said that they were 'proud' to stand alongside the Georgian people and support the country's democratic development.

Police has detained seven individuals for administrative offences and have launched investigations into 16 criminal cases which took place during the municipal elections on October 2. The seven individuals have been detained for disobedience to police and hooliganism. Three out of the seven individuals were detained in Marneuli, two in Aspindza, one in Lanchkhuti and another in Tbilisi.

Sources in English: Agenda.ge, [OSCE/ODIHR](#), [EU/US Embassies](#), [Police](#), [EU MEPs](#), [US Senator](#), October 3-7/2021.

6. PM Gharibashvili on Leaked SSSG Files: Investigation Progressing

Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili says the investigation into the files allegedly leaked from the State Security Service (SSS) is moving forward really fast. Calling the files fabricated, Garibashvili claims they were targeted against the state, the SSS itself, and the church. "The overwhelming



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slander of the election campaign has been mixed with anti-state actions and provocations, the conspiracy”, PM Garibashvili said. Stating that the society will find out the truth pretty soon after the investigation ends, Garibashvili claims everyone responsible will be brought to justice. “We are very well aware whom this dirty signature is connected with. This is [Mikheil] Saakashvili and his new allies. The investigation will tell the rest”, he told Imedi TV. On the question whether Saakashvili’s new ally is former Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia, Garibashvili preferred not to speak ahead. Georgian media outlets received thousands of files titled ‘Georgian State Security Service’s compromising materials against Patriarchate’ online from an unidentified sender which contained the personal data of top clerics pointing at alleged crimes such as spying for Russia, taking bribes and sexual relations with minors. The Georgian Chief Prosecutor’s Office launched the investigation into the case day after the disclosure of the files. The files have been removed from the internet and are no longer available for the public.

Source in English: Agenda.ge, [PM Gharibashvili](#), October 3/2021

7. Clerics Meet about Leaked SSSG Files

Georgian top clerics have discussed the issue of files allegedly leaked from the country’s State Security Service (SSS) last month which pointed at alleged crimes committed by clerics. The statement made after the discussion late yesterday said that the ‘goal of the leaked files was to engage the church in the election process, to discredit it and spark internal conflicts.’ The patriarchate condemned ‘illegal surveillance’ and stated that it will ‘closely observe the investigation process’ into the leaked files case. The patriarchate claims that they will use all measures to recheck alleged immoral actions by clerics outlined in the files, including alleged sexual crimes and paedophilia. It says that the information in the files and statements made by ‘anti-church clerics and theologists suspiciously coincide,’ concluding that the individuals and critical media outlets may have acted together to discredit the church.

Source in English: Agenda.ge, [SSSG files](#), October 8/2021

8. UNM Loses Majority in Zugdidi Sakrebulo (City Council)

The United National Movement party no longer has a secured majority in Zugdidi Municipal Council as it lost one majoritarian seat to Georgian Dream after recounts, said Ana Tsitlidze, UNM lawmaker, late on October 7. After a recount in four of the six precincts of the N11 majoritarian district in Zugdidi, the District Election Commission reportedly handed a win to Georgian Dream candidate Soso Gogokhia over UNM majoritarian hopeful Manuchar Pipia, who had secured a first-round win as per initial results. This would mean the UNM has currently secured 22 Sakrebulo seats, GD – 19, and For Georgia – 3, while one district goes to a runoff. Preliminary results, meanwhile, showed UNM with 23 seats, enough to independently form a majority in 45-member Zugdidi Sakrebulo.

Source in English: Civil.ge, [Zugdidi elections](#), October 8/2021.



SOCIAL & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

9. World Bank: “Fast Economic Recovery Underway in Georgia”

Georgia is leading the South Caucasus region with a projected rebound of 8% this year, says the latest edition of the World Bank’s Economic Update for the region. “Georgia’s recovery is expected to edge down to 5.5% in 2022 and 5% in 2023, as macroeconomic support continues to be removed”, reads the report. The World Bank says that among the subregions of Europe and Central Asia, the South Caucasus suffered the sharpest collapse in output in 2020, contracting more than 5%. Output in the South Caucasus, boosted by the recovery in consumption and a strong pick-up in exports, is projected to rebound sharply in 2021, expanding 5.8%, with Georgia leading the region this year. “The South Caucasus countries, and Georgia in particular, are seeing a robust recovery from the shocks of 2020, supported by pick-up in domestic demand and recovery among external partners. However, amid rising inflation and slowly recovering labour market outcomes, increasing the pace of vaccination remains a critical priority”, said World Bank Regional Director for the South Caucasus Sebastian Molineus. He added that reforming state-owned enterprises, fostering human capital and promoting innovation and digital transformation can improve productivity, while rebuilding economic buffers and preparing for the impact of climate change will make growth resilient. The Georgian economy grew 10.3% in August and 12% in the first eight months of 2021, show preliminary data from the National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat).

Source in English: Agenda.ge, [Recovery](#), October 6/2021.

10. 1806 Projects, 2.5 Billion GEL Investments, 53’000 Jobs: Ministers of Economy, Agriculture Summarize State-Supported Projects

The National Bank of Georgia (NBG) sold 60 million USD at foreign exchange auction on September 30 to control the national currency's (lari) depreciation against the US dollar, however lari still depreciated by 1.56 tetri. The average weighted bid rate was 3.1186, while today 1 USD costs 3.1345 GEL. The lari has depreciated against the Euro as well by 2.12 tetri. 1 EUR costs 3.631 GEL. This was the ninth intervention this year and as of now the bank has sold 332,9 USD million in total.

Source in English: Agenda.ge, [Lari depreciation](#), October 1/2021

11. Georgia’s Wine Export Up 12% Compared to Previous Year

Georgia exported 72.5 million bottles of wine to 60 countries in January-September 2021, which is an increase of 12% compared to the same period of 2020, says the Georgian National Wine Agency. By selling wine abroad Georgia generated 168 million USD. Revenues increased by 11% year-on-year.



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The top five countries that imported Georgian wine in January-September 2021 were:

1. Russia – 43,350,901 bottles (+7%)
2. Ukraine – 8,609,575 bottles (+8%)
3. Poland – 4,156,777 bottles (+24%)
4. China – 3,961,484 bottles (+16%)
5. Kazakhstan – 2,805,598 bottles (+32%)

Exports of Georgian wine increased to these strategic markets countries:

- UK – 178% increase (513,724 bottles)
- Lithuania - 36% increase (744,600 bottles)
- US - 18% increase (807,413 bottles)
- Latvia - 2% increase (1,218,075 bottles)

In total 397 companies exported wine abroad in the reporting period. Meanwhile, Georgia exported 25.5 million bottles of Georgian brandy (+17%) and 660,000 bottles of chacha (+97%) abroad in the first eight months of 2021. In total, Georgia has sold 270 million USD worth of alcoholic beverages (+15%) in the reporting period, including wine, brandy, chacha and others.

Source in English: Agenda.ge, [wine export](#), October 8/2021.

12. Georgia's Potential in Business Outsourcing

Ryan Strategic Advisory has published a research paper on business process outsourcing (BPO) opportunities in Georgia, which reads that the country has come onto the outsourcing scene 'with a tight, targeted business services offering that is attracting the attention of executives across western demand markets'. The paper reads that over the past five years Georgia has managed to develop a growing and competitive services ecosystem and the reasons for this include:

- Strong economy
- Competitive taxation regime - the most important provisions to encourage BPO investment include no taxes on retained profits, low personal income taxes (currently 20%) and a flat corporate income tax capped at 15%
- Low levels of red tape - from a regulatory standpoint, Georgia is among the easiest for new investors to navigate
- Incentives that work for the outsourcer - Georgia has instituted several measures that help alleviate different cost buckets, including grants of up to \$230,000 for new BPO projects

"Collectively, these factors have already led to significant BPO investment in Georgia. These include global providers [entrance to the country] such as Concentrix, Majorel, and EPAM, through to local upstarts such as the Georgian Service Group (GSG)", reads the paper. The paper reads that one of the reasons that so many operators are looking at the opportunities to deliver services from Georgia relate to the country's linguistic talent: "In fact, with nearly 600,000 foreign language speakers in



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the country's major cities, outsourcers are finding that Georgia can provide the basis for a niche multilingual hub", reads the paper. According to Invest in Georgia, among the students who have taken foreign language tests in the country's national examinations over a decade-long period, there is scalability in English, Russian and German. In addition, while the numbers of speakers are lower, there is also the potential for recruiting talent that speaks Italian, French and Turkish, reads the paper.

Source in English: Agenda.ge, [Outsourcing](#), October 6/2021.

13. New 47 Million EUR 7-Year Project for Forest Reform

The Green Climate Fund is launching a new 47 million EUR ECO. Georgia project to support the implementation of Georgia's forest sector reform in 2021-2027, announces the Ministry of Economy of Georgia. The project will cover the Georgian regions of Guria, Mtskheta-Mtianeti and Kakheti with its eight municipalities of Akhmeta, Telavi, Dedoplistskaro, Kvareli, Tianeti, Lanchkhuti, Ozurgeti and Chokhatauri. As part of the project the Georgian Ministries of Economy and Agriculture and the German development agency GIZ signed the technical cooperation agreement. Georgian Economy Minister Natia Turnava said that in order to reduce the use of firewood for heating, the Ministry of Economy has been actively supplying the country with the natural gas and so far the natural gas is accessible in 90% of Georgia, 'which is unprecedented for a country with a landscape like ours'.

Source in English: Agenda.ge, [Forest reform](#), October 1/2021

14. Georgia Adopts Cybersecurity Strategy for 2021-2024

Government has approved the country's 3rd National Cybersecurity Strategy of Georgia for 2021-2024. The document established four priorities: Developing an information society, and cyberculture at organizations; Resilient cybersecurity governance system and strengthening public-private partnership; Enhancing cyber capabilities with a strong cyber workforce and relevant technical support; Strengthening Georgia's position, as a net contributor to cybersecurity internationally. The strategy, approved by Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili on September 30, identified two core threat groups: Cyberwar, information warfare, cyber espionage, cyber-attacks run by state actors, and cybercrime, including attacks on critical infrastructure.

Discussing cyberwar, the strategy highlights that Russia carries out information warfare against Georgia, including through propaganda and disinformation, accompanied by an increasing number of advanced persistent threats coming from Russia, aiming at unauthorized access to public and private critical information systems. Noting that organizations handling the critical information systems and services cannot ensure an "appropriate level of cybersecurity," the document stressed the need for bolstering said security capacities.

Recalling the 2008 Russian cyber-attacks on Georgian public and private sector, the document stressed that Russia remains the main threat for the country in terms of cyber-warfare.

As for cybercrime, the document lists phishing, ransomware, deface, distributed denial of service and mail spoofing as some of the most prevalent forms of cybercrime in the country. According to the strategy, commercial entities are being increasingly targetted by cybercrime, alongside state



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agencies. The National Security Council said the document was penned in close cooperation with civil society, as well as the private sector, and with involvement of experts from the United Kingdom.

Source in English: Civil.ge, [Cybersecurity Strategy](#), October 7/2021.

15. Safety Issues in Old Buildings in Georgia

Building collapsed in Batumi: Another building collapsed, this time in Batumi. The entrance of a seven-storey residential building located on May 26 Street has collapsed in the old part of the Black Sea coastal city of Batumi. As locals told Rustavi 2, the residential building had three entrances and only one had collapsed. As reported, about 200 people live in the building, however information about the injured has not been released yet. The rescuers are going through the rubble and using a ladder to evacuate nearby apartments. Local media outlet Batumelebi.ge reports that about 10 cars are under ruins, from which a 6-year-old child was rescued alive.

Gas leak explosion in Varketili: One individual has received light injuries after an explosion in a residential building in Tbilisi, in the third micro district of Varketili earlier. The explosion happened on the sixth floor of a nine-storey residential building, allegedly because of a gas leak. The Emergency Management Service has stated that the injured individual has immediately been transported to hospital, while the fire was extinguished shortly. Police are looking into the incident.

Collapse of residential building in Chugureti: A residential building has collapsed in the Chugureti district, Tbilisi. The local municipal government says nobody was injured. The four families which have lost their homes will be relocated to alternative homes. The rent will be covered by the local government.

Sources in English: Agenda.ge, [Gas leak explosion](#), Chugureti [Building collapse](#), [Batumi building collapse](#), October 7-8/2021.

OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

16. De Facto Authorities of Occupied Abkhazia Close Enguri Bridge Due to Municipal Elections

Enguri bridge, connecting Georgian-controlled territory and occupied Abkhazia was closed down, preventing local residents from voting during the 2021 municipal elections.

Source in English: [Report.ge](#), October 2/2021

17. Military Drills to be Held in Occupied Abkhazia

Military exercises are planned in Georgia's Russian occupied Abkhazia on October 19-20 where military servicemen of the de facto "defense ministry" of Georgia's breakaway South Ossetia (Tskhinvali region) will participate along with local armed forces, Radio Liberty Georgian service



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reports. The de facto “Defence Minister” of the occupied Tskhinvali region (South Ossetia) Ibrahim Gaseev received an invitation to take part in the drills from his de facto Abkhaz counterpart Vladimir Anua. The invitation states that the military drills were planned on the basis of an agreement between the commanders of the armed forces of the Russian occupied Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Background*** The agreement on military cooperation between the occupied Tskhinvali region (South Ossetia) and occupied Abkhazia was signed in 2009. Russia recognised the independence of Georgia’s occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali (South Ossetia) region on August 26, 2008, following the Russia-Georgia war. Only four other countries – Venezuela, Nicaragua, Nauru and Syria – share Russia’s position regarding the occupied Georgian territories’ status. The rest of the international community is unanimous that the regions are occupied by Russia and it must withdraw troops from Georgian territory.

Source in English: Agenda.ge, [Military drills](#), October 7/2021.

18. Illegally Detained Georgian Citizens Released from Tskhinvali

Two Georgian citizens illegally detained by the occupation forces near the Russian-occupied Georgian region of Tskhinvali have been released. Goga Metreveli, Roman Gochashvili and Nikoloz Pekshvelashvili were detained on October 4. However, the latter was released on October 5 amid the multiple injuries he received in his attempt to escape. Based on the State Security Service of Georgia, the three were detained on the occupied territory adjacent to the village of Ergneti. The illegal detention of Georgian citizens by Russian occupation forces near the occupation line of Tskhinvali and Abkhazia is a common issue. The detainees are usually released after their families pay a so-called “fine”.

Source in English: Agenda.ge, [Illegal detentions](#), October 6/2021

19. 2336.7 Million Rubles – Tax Income to Budget of De Facto Government of Occupied Abkhazia

De facto “Ministry of Taxation” of occupied Abkhazia concluded that there have been 2336.7 million ruble taxes – income to de facto budget in the past 9 months. Of those: 1212.8 million – from Sokhumi city, 589.3 million – from Gagra, 216.7 – from Gudauta, 75.6 million – from rural Sokhumi, 120.6, 56.9 – from Gulripshi, 89.9 millio – from Ochamchire, 16.3 – from Tkvarcheli and 34.1 – from Gali districts.

Source: Apsnypress.info, [taxes](#), October 8/2021.



FOREIGN AFFAIRS

20. Economy Minister on Importance of Middle Corridor, Anaklia & Poti Ports

Georgian Economy Minister Natia Turnava has spoke at a meeting of delegations from Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Kazakhstan, held within the Ministerial of Transport in Turkey today and drew attention to the progress made in making the Trans-Caspian East-West Middle Corridor operational and Georgia's role as a regional transport hub in it. The Trans-Caspian East-West-Middle Corridor, shortly named as the 'Middle Corridor', begins in Turkey and passes through the Caucasus region via Georgia, Azerbaijan, crosses the Caspian Sea, traverses Central Asia and reaches China. It passes by rail and road through Georgia, Azerbaijan and Caspian Sea, (crossing the Caspian transit corridor) and reaches China by following the Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan or Kazakhstan route. At the ministerial Turnava focused on the growing dynamics of container traffic in the Middle Corridor, saying that last year the turnover of containers from China through Georgia increased 12.9% compared to 2019, while for January-August 2021 growth was 268% year-on-year. She also said that the number of containers transported on the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway is growing steadily. "In particular, an increase of 56.4% was recorded in the first eight months of 2021", said Turnava.

Turnava said that Georgia's role in the corridor is very important. She said that for decades, Georgia has been actively involved in various interconnection initiatives, including TRACECA, the Middle Corridor, the Black Sea-Caspian Sea Corridor, which aims to develop efficient, short and reliable transport routes between Europe and Asia. She said that Georgia has actively been developing transport infrastructure and brought as an example the projects of Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, the East-West Highway and the development of port infrastructure in the country. Turnava mentioned the Anaklia Deep Sea Port project which is planned to be developed near the Black Sea Anaklia resort in western Georgia and said that the government will announce a tender for the development of the project. She also said that expansion of Poti port and the development of logistics centers by attracting private investors is 'on our agenda'. At the ministerial the delegations from Georgia, Turkey, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan discussed how to make the Middle Corridor more competitive in the face of global competition. Turnava said she would welcome the establishment of a joint working group to further increase the effectiveness of the corridor and improve transport links.

Source in English: [Agenda.ge](https://agenda.ge), [Middle Corridor](#), October 7/2021



20. NATO Military Committee Head: “Our Fourth Visit to Georgia Points at Unique Partnership”

Head of NATO Military Committee Admiral Rob Bauer has stated that the committee's fourth visit to Georgia ‘points at a unique partnership between NATO and Georgia which is becoming stronger year by year.’ Bauer arrived in Georgia late on October 7 and has already met with Georgian Defence Minister Juansher Burchuladze. Burchuladze stated that NATO-Georgia relations are ‘unprecedented’ and that the alliance’s ‘continued political and practical support’ for Georgia confirms this. Bauer and Burchuladze have discussed progress achieved in the implementation of the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package (SNGP) and Black Sea security. Bauer has praised Georgia’s contribution to international peace and security. The military committee is the senior military authority in NATO and the oldest permanent body in the alliance after the North Atlantic Council.

Sources in English: Agenda.ge, [NATO](#), October 8/2021.

21. Montenegro President Milo Djukanovic Visits Georgia for the First Time

For the first time, in history of Georgia-Montenegro diplomatic relations, President of Montenegro visits Georgia. Montenegro became a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) back in 2017 and is preparing now to become a member of the European Union (EU). President Djukanovic will be welcomed by Georgian President Salome Zurbishvili at the Orbeliani Presidential Palace where an official welcoming ceremony will take place, after which the two presidents will have a face-to-face meeting and a joint briefing.

Source in English: Agenda.ge, [Montenegro visit](#), October 7/2021

22. Georgian Appoints New Ambassador to Ukraine

Former Director of the Political Department of Georgian Foreign Ministry Giorgi Zakarashvili has been appointed as Georgia’s new Ambassador of Ukraine. Zakarashvili was the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Georgian Interests Section at the Embassy of the Swiss Confederation in Russia in 2016-2019, while in 2007-2011 he held the position of Senior Advisor there. Giorgi Zakarashvili was the Head of the Central Asian Relations Division at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia in 2011-2012. Zakarashvili worked in the Global Relations Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia in 2007. At various times Zakarashvili has worked at the CIS and Peaceful Caucasus Affairs State Bureau. He also worked at Tbilisi City Hall. The Acting Ambassador of Georgia to Ukraine was summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine on October 1 over the issue of recently detained ex-president of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili, who is a Ukrainian citizen. The ministry demanded an explanation from the acting ambassador of Georgia why Saakashvili was detained in Georgia. Former Georgian Ambassador to Ukraine Teimuraz Sharashenidze was recalled to Tbilisi last year after former President Mikheil Saakashvili became chair of the executive committee of the Ukrainian National Reforms Council.



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Source in English: Agenda.ge, [Ukraine Ambassador](#), October 4/2021