

GEORGIA UPDATE

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- Georgian Government, Representatives of Occupied Territories Resume Incident-Prevention Talks



Prime Minister Gilauri, continuing his tour through Asia, said Georgia could see potential investments of \$500 million from India and China in the coming years. "The potential projects range from investments in port, construction of a trade center and anew metallurgical factory," he said at a forum organized by the *Financial Times*. "Our economy ministry and our embassies in those countries should now work actively with investors in order to materialize all these projects. There is a huge interest and we hope that we will actually see quite significant investment projects implemented by Chinese and Indian companies in the near future."

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"Georgia can expect that we will reconfirm what we decided in 2008 at the Bucharest summit. As you will recall, we decided in 2008 that Georgia will become a member of NATO, provided of course that Georgia fulfills the necessary criteria to become a member of NATO. So we will reconfirm the decision we took in Bucharest."

"NATO insists on full respect for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We pursue a clear non-recognition policy when it comes to Abkhazia and South Ossetia."

—NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, at a press conference in Moscow on Wednesday

"Society should have full and comprehensive information about media owners, who are behind media organizations and how they are financed. The initiative is part of our democratic reform package and it will be a step forward toward democracy development."

—Parliament Speaker Bakradze

UPCOMING MILESTONES

Nov. 8-13: UN permanent representatives from South/Central America visit Georgia

Nov. 12-13: FM Vashadze visits Morocco

Nov. 17: FM Vashadze visits Tunis

Nov. 19-20: NATO summit in Lisbon

Nov. 23: 7th anniversary of the Rose Revolution

Nov. 24-25: Ukrainian FM visits Georgia

Dec. 1-2: OSCE summit in Astana

TOP STORIES

NATO Secretary General Reaffirms Georgia's Path to Membership in the Alliance

NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, on a visit to Moscow, has reaffirmed that the Alliance remains steadfast in its commitment to making Georgia a full member. "Georgia can expect that we will reconfirm what we decided in 2008 at the Bucharest summit," he said on Wednesday. "As you will recall, we decided in 2008 that Georgia will become a member of NATO provided of course that Georgia fulfills the necessary criteria to become a member of NATO. So we will reconfirm the decision we took in Bucharest." Rasmussen also reaffirmed NATO's refusal to recognize the independence of Georgia's Russian-occupied territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. "NATO insists on full respect for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity," he said. "We pursue a clear non-recognition policy when it comes to Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The Secretary-General, meanwhile, said he believes that better relations between NATO and Russia could help lead to the de-occupation of Georgia. "I do believe that an improved relationship between NATO and Russia is the best chance to ensure peaceful solutions to such disputes."

[RIA NOVOSTI: NATO will not change Georgia policy at Lisbon summit—Rasmussen](#)

Ruling Party Proposes Dialogue With Opposition on Electoral Reform

Georgia's ruling United National Movement party has proposed to launch consultations with opposition parties on the further reform of the electoral code. "I am ready to meet all those political parties, which are ready to come to the Parliament without any preconditions and ultimatums with readiness for compromise," said Parliament Speaker Bakradze. "There is a readiness for compromise and openness on our part; we welcome any political party with a similar stance and we are ready to work with them." Bakradze urged the opposition to engage in a substantive debate devoid of political theatrics: "The process of improving the electoral environment should be based on mutual confidence, negotiations, and agreement between the parties, and I do not think that ultimatum or prepared documents will contribute to the process." Georgia's electoral code has undergone significant improvements in recent years, following intensive revisions with input from Georgian political parties, civil society, and international organizations—including the Council of Europe's Venice Commission, which has played a pivotal role. The country's next nationwide elections—to vote in a new Parliament—are scheduled for 2012.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Ruling Party on Opposition's Call for Election Reform Talks](#)

Georgia to Make Media Ownership Fully Transparent

Parliament this week debated a draft law to enhance media transparency. "Society should have full and comprehensive information about media owners, who stands behind media organizations, and how they are financed," Parliament Speaker Bakradze said during the initial debate. "This initiative is part of our democratic reform package and it will be a step forward toward democracy development," he added, saying the Parliament's goal is to bring Georgian legislation into line with international media standards. A group of media and legal experts met last week to present draft on media transparency and improving public access to information. Among the goals Bakradze outlined was prohibiting offshore companies from owning Georgian media, as well as a code of conduct that would help enforce strict reporting standards. The reform initiative comes in response to criticism about the lack of transparency in the ownership of two of Georgia's largest broadcasters, Rustavi 2 and Imedi TV.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Georgia to Make Media Ownership 'Fully Transparent'](#)

Parliament Approves "Liberty Charter" in Step to Thwart Terrorism

Parliament this week approved initial proposals aiming to boost security and anti-terrorism efforts. Passed by a 75 to 1 vote, the Liberty Charter, sponsored by MP Gia Tortladze, includes measures to enhance the security of strategic facilities through the use of means such as video surveillance systems. If ultimately passed, the charter also would require commercial banks to report any transfers to foreign accounts exceeding \$14,000. The package also contains measures to restrict the public display of Soviet and Nazi symbols, and proposes establishing a state commission to assess the prevalence of symbols, monuments, inscriptions, and street names that may reflect or contain elements of communist or fascist ideology and propaganda. Lawmakers are reviewing the bill, making amendments to enhance and improve the proposals before a second reading.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: MPs Pass 'Liberty Charter' with First Reading](#)

Georgian Government, Representatives of Occupied Territories Resume Incident-Prevention Talks

After having been suspended for over a year, conflict-mediation talks among Georgian authorities, representatives of the occupied territory of S. Ossetia, and representatives of the Russian occupying forces resumed last week within the framework of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM). Coordinated by the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia and the OSCE, IPRM serves as a diplomatic forum to address routine security concerns and developments on the ground. "It was the first meeting after a long pause, so obviously the resumption of meetings is an important fact," said Shota Utiashvili, the interior ministry official who headed Georgia's delegation. "We talked about all the issues related to the situation along the border, the security of the citizens, water problems and the detained Georgians. The discussion was quite positive." Added the EUMM: "The meeting passed in a businesslike and constructive atmosphere." The session was held in the village of Ergneti on the administrative border of Russian-occupied territory of S. Ossetia. IPRM participants will convene again on Dec. 10.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Tbilisi, Tskhinvali Resume IPRM Meetings](#)

**Double medal joy for young Georgian Judo stars in Morocco**

Georgia celebrated the victory of two Georgian judo stars, Avanti Tchrikishvili and Zebeda Rekhviashvili, as the athletes returned home last week from the World Junior Championships in Agadir, Morocco with a medal each. Tchrikishvili claimed gold in the 81kg division while Rekhviashvili collected bronze.

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

THE ECONOMIST: The Caucasus—playground for war

Perhaps the West’s best bet is to learn from a long history of outside interference and look after themselves. Here author Thomas de Waal, in his latest book entitled *Caucasus: An Introduction*, is slightly unfair on President Saakashvili, in particular. He has modernized and reformed Georgia, shaking off the remnants of the Soviet legacy. If Armenia and Azerbaijan could follow suit, the Caucasus could yet prosper—surely the best hope for resolving its entrenched conflicts. www.economist.com

WALL STREET JOURNAL: Sarkozy’s Russian gamble

Moscow has acknowledged that the 26-hour war with neighboring Georgia two years ago exposed weaknesses in Russia’s tactical arsenal, and that the large Mistral helicopter carriers would have enabled them to achieve their military objectives in minutes rather than hours. Sarkozy cannot be unaware of the dangers of Russia’s aggressive foreign policy, and thus far, has governed French foreign policy with a some measure of courage as his predecessors. He might see himself as a bridge between the Atlantic and the Urals, exercising some restraining influence on a Russia still in post-Soviet recovery. Or he might have something altogether different in mind. online.wsj.com

FOREIGN POLICY: What will Georgia demand?

Nobody expects that Georgia will be able to block Russia’s WTO bid, but the question is: what concessions will it extract in return for acquiescing? Recently, Georgian politicians have linked Moscow’s bid to progress on borders and customs. It seems more likely that Washington, Brussels and others eager to have Russia in the club will sweeten the pot somehow for Georgia. bosco.foreignpolicy.com

DEUTSCHE PRESSE AGENTUR: Georgia targets EU visa-easing in November

Georgia hopes to sign a deal with the EU this month that would almost halve the price of EU visas for all its citizens, including those in the country’s Russian-occupied territories of S. Ossetia and Abkhazia, FM Vashadze said last week. “We hope that it will be signed somewhere at the end of October or throughout November. We still have to set the date but it will be much sooner rather than later,” he added in Luxembourg after talks with EU counterparts. www.monstersandcritics.com

HAARETZ: Interview—Georgian minister Vera Kobalia

“The Georgian government has carried out quite a few reforms in many areas, including to the police force; About 30,000 policemen were sent home almost simultaneously,” Georgian Economy Minister Vera Kobalia last week said in an interview with Israel’s daily newspaper Haaretz. “The objective was to eliminate the corruption that devoured everything in our country. Now our businessmen are protected and have to pay only taxes, nothing more. Everyone is equal before the law and an attempt to give a bribe will be handled in keeping with the law,” she added on the arrest by Georgian authorities of two Israeli businessmen, Ron Fuchs and Zeev Frankel, on bribery charges. “Of course Frenkel and Fuchs are presumed innocent as long as it hasn’t been proven otherwise. They will receive proper defense, in order to prove their innocence.” www.economy.ge



FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG: Review of Russian Lessons
 “Russian Lessons,” Andrei Nekrasov’s documentary about Russia’s 2008 invasion and ethnic cleansing of Georgia, received rave reviews at the renowned DOK Leipzig Festival in Germany. Wrote *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*: “The film was in every detail a convincing documentation of the Russian war guilt, which was concealed in Moscow and forgotten quickly in the Western countries.” “Russian Lessons” will be broadcast on German television in the coming weeks. www.faz.net

REUTERS: Georgia—no backing down over Russia WTO entry
 Georgia will keep up its objections to Russia’s accession to the WTO for as long as necessary, President Saakashvili last week said in an interview with Reuters about Georgia’s position on the Russian WTO entry bid. “We are ready for serious, meaningful talks about the issues but we have certain issues that cannot be overlooked and cannot be overcome by neglect,” he said. “I think the Georgian issues are still there. We will stick to our principles for as long as it takes,” Saakashvili added, speaking on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum on the Middle East and N. Africa, in Marrakesh. www.businessweek.com

DIE ZEIT: Tbilisi as a role model
 According to David Kereselidze, head of the accreditation agency at the Georgian Ministry of Education, a Georgian bachelor degree in law studies qualifies graduates as legal experts. The Georgian law degree serves as a role model for Germany as a German bachelor degree in law requires additional master’s degree courses to be considered legitimate. Georgian students who have successfully completed the bachelor degree law courses, and are uninterested in becoming a judge or attorney, are also able to start a professional career in another field, Kereselidze added. www.zeit.de

THINK TANKS/NGOs HERITAGE: The US takes “new Europe” for granted at its own peril
 After the invasion of Georgia, it is now official Russian policy that the government has the right to use force in the interest of protecting Russian-speaking minorities or Russian citizens in neighboring countries, the so-called compatriots. Second, in Russia’s foreign policy today, there is a strong emphasis on spheres of privileged Russian interests in the “near abroad.” Russian public opinion is on board, too: 60 percent of the population supports re-establishing Russian control or influence over CEE countries. In this context, the Obama Administration’s decision to focus on great power politics with Russia severely upset the US-Central and Eastern European (CEE) relationships at every level. www.heritage.org