

# GEORGIA UPDATE

WEEKLY EDITION • 2 December 2010

A Publication of the Government of Georgia

[www.georgiaupdate.gov.ge](http://www.georgiaupdate.gov.ge)

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- Placido Domingo Performs in Batumi, Tours City’s Opera House



President Saakashvili met US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Wednesday at the OSCE Summit in Astana. Clinton praised Georgia’s commitment not to use force to reunify the occupied territories. “We particularly welcome President Saakashvili’s pledge not to use force unilaterally,” she said. “And we hope this pledge can help us break new diplomatic ground.” Clinton also called out Russia for blocking OSCE observers from monitoring the occupied territories. “It is regrettable that a participating state has proposed to host a mission and the OSCE has not been allowed to respond,” she said. “We here at this table must let this organization do its job and restore a meaningful OSCE presence to Georgia.”

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## QUOTES OF THE WEEK

“I see it as a constructive step and positive contribution to ongoing efforts towards a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict. We are looking forward to further steps, as announced by President Saakashvili in his speech, and stand ready to continue the active engagement of the EU in the conflict resolution efforts in Georgia.”

—EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton on Georgia’s unilateral pledge not to use force

“I welcome the President’s declaration...to renounce the unilateral use of force and invite Russia to talks. I hope that Russia will respond positively to this offer. The only way to ensure lasting stability in the region is by peaceful means and diplomatic efforts. I congratulated President Saakashvili for being not only a brave man but also a prudent one. Courage and prudence should go together hand in hand.”

—Jerzy Buzek, European Parliament President

“The signature of a readmission agreement is a concrete step forward in EU-Georgia relations. The visa facilitation and readmission agreements are a very tangible result of the Eastern Partnership and will promote interaction between citizens of the EU and Georgia and strengthen our cooperation in the fight against irregular immigration.”

—Cecilia Malström, European Commissioner for Home Affairs

## UPCOMING MILESTONES

**Dec. 1-2:** OSCE summit in Astana

**Dec. 7:** EU-Georgia Cooperation Council in Brussels

**Dec. 7-8:** Parliament Speaker Bakradze in Slovakia

**Dec. 13:** Eastern Partnership ministerial meeting in Brussels

**Dec. 15-16:** FM Vashadze visits Croatia

**Dec. 16:** Next round of Geneva talks

## TOP STORIES

**US Calls for Restoration of OSCE Mission in Georgia; “A Matter of Urgency,” Says UK**

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, speaking Wednesday at the OSCE Summit, called for international monitors to return to Georgia's occupied territories. “It is regrettable that a participating state has proposed to host a mission and the OSCE has not been allowed to respond,” she said, noting Washington's “strong support” of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. “We here at this table must let this organization do its job and restore a meaningful OSCE presence to Georgia.” Russia has blocked OSCE monitors from being stationed in the occupied territories. The UK, Sweden, and Germany joined in the call for the restoration of the OSCE mission in Georgia. British Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg told the summit that re-establishing of OSCE mission in Georgia “is a matter of urgency.”

Secretary Clinton also hailed Georgia's pledge not to use force in order to de-occupy the occupied territories. “We particularly welcome President Saakashvili's pledge not to use force unilaterally,” she said. “And we hope this pledge can help us break new diplomatic ground.” As did several other leaders at the summit, including German Chancellor Merkel, Clinton stressed that Russia must respect the 2008 ceasefire. “We also call on all parties to fully respect and implement the August and September 2008 ceasefire arrangements.”

[DEUTSCHE PRESSE AGENTUR: Clinton, Medvedev disagree on OSCE role in Georgia](#)

**EU Hails Georgia's Pledge Not to Use Force, as President Saakashvili Reiterates Call for Dialogue With Russia**

The EU hailed President Saakashvili's unilateral pledge not to use force to reclaim the country's Russian-occupied territories. “I see it as a constructive step and positive contribution to ongoing efforts towards a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict,” EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton said. “We are looking forward to further steps, as announced by President Saakashvili in his speech, and stand ready to continue the active engagement of the EU in the conflict resolution efforts in Georgia,” she said. President Saakashvili's speech last week at the European Parliament was also applauded by EP President Jerzy Buzek: “I welcome the President's declaration to renounce the unilateral use of force and invite Russia to talks. I hope that Russia will respond positively to this offer,” he said, adding: “I congratulated President Saakashvili for being not only a brave man but also a prudent one. Courage and prudence should go together hand in hand.”

At the OSCE Summit in Astana on Wednesday, President Saakashvili restated his pledge and again called on Russia to engage in a dialogue with Tbilisi. “I have just sent letters formulizing Georgia's pledge to the Secretary-General of the OSCE, UN and NATO, as well as the President of the European commission, the European Council and the United States,” he said. “I came here animated by the same spirit, reiterating my call to Russia's leadership to engage in serious negotiations, to engage in dialogue rather than in polemics. Unfortunately, despite our numerous calls Russia has not agreed to any dialogue held bilaterally within the framework of the OSCE.”

[CIVIL GEORGIA: EU Hails Tbilisi's Non-Use of Force Pledge](#)  
[PRESIDENT OF GEORGIA: Full text of OSCE speech](#)

**EU Says Russian “Border Demarcation” Violating Georgia's Territorial Integrity**

The EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia last week expressed concern over demarcation activities carried out by Russian forces along the administrative border of the Russian-occupied territory of S. Ossetia. “This is not the first time such measuring activity has been reported,” the EUMM said. “The Mission has increasing indications that this is part of a broader policy of unilateral border demarcation. The EUMM is concerned about these ‘border demarcation works,’ as they are incompatible with the principle of Georgian territorial integrity, which is fully supported by the EU.”

[CIVIL GEORGIA: EU Monitors Concerned over 'Border Demarcation'](#)

**Signing of Readmission Agreement Is “Concrete Step Forward in EU-Georgia Relations”**

The EU and Georgia have signed a readmission agreement to complement a visa facilitation pact signed last June. “The signature of a readmission agreement is a concrete step forward in EU-Georgia relations,” said Cecilia Malström, European Commissioner for Home Affairs. “The visa facilitation and readmission agreements are a very tangible result of the Eastern Partnership and will promote interaction between citizens of the EU and Georgia and strengthen our cooperation in the fight against irregular immigration,” she said.

Meanwhile, Štefan Füle, European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy, also welcomed the agreement: “It is a concrete sign of continued effort of the EU to strengthen relations with Georgia,” he said. “This signature will now allow both the visa facilitation and readmission agreements to be ratified and enter into force, facilitating mobility for Georgian citizens who want to come to the EU. It will make it easier, cheaper, and quicker to obtain a short term Schengen visa.” The readmission agreement sets out clear obligations and procedures for the authorities of both Georgia and EU member states on readmitting persons who are illegally residing on their territories, while the visa facilitation agreement makes it easier for Georgians to travel and live in the EU. The agreements will enter into force once both parties have completed their internal ratification procedures.

[EUROPA: European Union Signs Readmission Agreement with Georgia](#)

**Senior Officials Assume New Posts in Cabinet Reshuffle**

President Saakashvili last week shifted some of his most senior officials to new posts. First Deputy Foreign Minister Giga Bokeria was named the new Secretary of the National Security Council. Eka Tkeshelashvili, who headed the NSC until now, was named Deputy Prime Minister and State Minister for Reintegration. Moving from the latter post was Temuri Yakobashvili, who in January will become Georgia's new ambassador to the United States, pending approval from Parliament. His predecessor, Batu Kutelia, will assume the number two post at the NSC. Tkeshelashvili will be in charge of Tbilisi's policies towards the breakaway regions, as well as on the implementation of Tbilisi's state strategy on occupied territories and its action plan. Yakobashvili, meanwhile, said there is a “whole range of new possibilities” in US-Georgia relations, especially after the “very substantive, business-like and warm” meeting between President's Saakashvili and Obama in Lisbon last month.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Reshuffle in Government, NSC](#)



*President Saakashvili, First Lady Sandra Roelofs, and Placido Domingo last week toured Georgia's Black Sea resort of Batumi. The legendary Spanish tenor tested the acoustics of the city's famed opera house, which is under renovation. Domingo, along with six renowned Georgian opera singers, also held a concert in Batumi's Piazza Square.*

## INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

**AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE: Georgia eyes peaceful solution to Russia dispute**

Georgia is ready to give up force and talk without pre-conditions in a bid to end a bitter territorial dispute with Russia, President Saakashvili said in an interview last week before his address to the European Parliament in Strasbourg. "I am going to take the opportunity to commit to the non-use of force," he said. He recognized that this was "a controversial initiative as every country, when it is occupied, has the right and even the obligation to fight, including through military means, to defend its sovereignty." But Saakashvili insisted that he did not want to see his country "end up like Afghanistan or Chechnya," and was committed to peace.

[www.afp.com](http://www.afp.com)

**LE FIGARO: The Caucasian post-moderns**

Speaking to the European Parliament, President Saakashvili tried to assuage the concerns of Europe by making a unilateral commitment to renounce the use of force, and by offering a dialogue with no preconditions to the Russian occupier. This pacifism, which openly claims to be an expression of Kant's perpetual peace, is particularly remarkable as it marks a profound change that affects the spirit of international relations. Whatever the conclusion of this venture, it is likely that everywhere else, in Russia, in Ukraine, in Belarus, the "post-modern" synthesis being sought in Tbilisi will serve as a reference, if not as an example, to those who have not abandoned the ideal of making the cause of liberty triumph completely.

[www.lefigaro.fr](http://www.lefigaro.fr)

**SKY NEWS: Interview with President Saakashvili**

President Saakashvili highlighted Georgia's enhanced bilateral relations with the US in an interview with Sky News, held on the sidelines of the NATO summit in Lisbon. The President reflected on his first bilateral meeting with his US counterpart, President Obama, which occurred during the summit. The presidents discussed the strong and growing relations between their two countries and Georgia's progress in meeting the requirements to join the NATO alliance.

[news.sky.com](http://news.sky.com)

**SÜDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG: Friendly words for the arch enemy**

President Saakashvili has changed his strategy towards Russia and is now trying to renew bonds with Moscow. In his address to the European Parliament last week, he said both he and the Georgian people wanted Russia as a partner and not as an enemy. "We cannot change our countries' geography, so we must find a way to agree with each other," he said, pledging that Georgia will never use force to restore its territorial integrity.

[www.sueddeutsche.de](http://www.sueddeutsche.de)

**JAMESTOWN: Seven years after Georgia's Rose Revolution—from a failed state to a modern nation**

Over time, Georgia's institutions, including the police force, the army and the bureaucracy, have changed and become almost unrecognizable. The ambitious economic and structural reforms have put Georgia in the 11th spot in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business category and have made it one of the fastest-reforming economies. Meanwhile, societal changes have been likewise impressive. The traditional Soviet-styled elites, which in fact were competing clans with connections to power echelons in the Kremlin, have been largely replaced by associations and parties of Western-educated individuals who have the same kinds of debates about the role of government, religious and moral issues, and political and economic freedoms as elites do in the West.

[jamestownfoundation.blogspot.com](http://jamestownfoundation.blogspot.com)

**US warship makes Georgia port call**

The US guided-missile destroyer Gonzalez made a port call in Batumi this week to conduct routine, bilateral training sessions. "A joint theoretical and practical training of the ship's crew and Georgian coast guard personnel will be carried out," the Georgian Border Police said, adding that a number of social and community relations events were also planned. The warship and crew will stay until the end of this week. Similar port calls by US warships are made a few times a year and are considered routine "friendly visits."

**UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL: Georgia lets Russian visit accused spies**

Four Russians jailed on spy charges have been visited by a Russian diplomat, the Georgian government said last week. "The Russian consul met with the detainees on Monday," Deputy FM Kalandadze said. The Georgian foreign ministry earlier this month said the government had exposed a Russian spy network of 15 people, including four Russian nationals.

[www.upi.com](http://www.upi.com)

**ASSOCIATED PRESS: Georgian deputy PM defends protest of Sochi Games**

Deputy PM Baramidze said he backs the Georgian parliament initiative against the Sochi Olympics because "the Olympic movement is something different than what Russia demonstrates today," adding: "I don't think that the Olympic movement is something close to the killing of hundreds of thousand people in N. Caucasus, in Chechnya and elsewhere, killing its own journalists, putting in prison businessmen just because they have different opinions, and I don't think it's a good idea to occupy a neighboring country's territory."

[www.signonsandiego.com](http://www.signonsandiego.com)

**JERUSALEM POST: Israel-loving Georgian economy minister**

After a three-day whirlwind tour in Israel—in which she met three cabinet ministers, signed two bilateral agreements, held meetings with a variety of business people and even managed to fit in some tourism—Georgian Economy Minister Kobalia came out with a decisive conclusion—she loves Israel. Tourism matters made up a big portion of her agenda during the visit and it may pay off. After signing an agreement with the transportation minister, he said he hoped Georgia proved a suitable substitute for Turkey as an Israeli seaside destination. If that proves to be the case, Georgia can expect a boom in incoming tourism.

[www.jpost.com](http://www.jpost.com)

**BLOOMBERG: Georgia to Offer Free Land, Airport to Build Resort**

President Saakashvili promised free land and construction of a new airport to lure hoteliers and other investors to build a tourist resort at the Black Sea port of Anaklia. He said investors would receive tax exemptions for 15 years to help build the resort. Anaklia borders Poti, Georgia's first free economic zone, and Abkhazia, a Georgian region occupied by Russia.

[www.bloomberg.com](http://www.bloomberg.com)