



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

**MEMO**

Tbilisi, 18 October 2012

**Statement by Commissioner Štefan Füle to the media in Tbilisi**

We came to Georgia with Helga Schmid, the deputy secretary general of the EEAS, on behalf of the High Representative Catherine Ashton. I am glad to be in Georgia so soon after the elections and just a few days after the Foreign Ministers of the EU discussed the peaceful transfer of power based on the decision of the voters in a democratic ballot and after the Ministers repeated our readiness to support Georgia in getting closer to the EU.

In burying their differences, the leaders of Georgia ensured that the historic transfer of power proceeded smoothly. President Saakashvili and Mr Ivanishvili have put their country's best interests first and we salute their statesmanship and their patriotism. The European Union counts on them to continue to work together in this constructive spirit.

We all know that cohabitation can be hard. We spoke to Mr Ivanishvili about this today, and will meet the President later tonight. The way in which the two work together will provide further proof of how far Georgia has travelled along the path to democratic maturity.

As well as Mr Ivanishvili, we have met several of his new Ministers today, and we look forward to continuing to work closely with the new government on our very dynamic bilateral agenda.

Georgia and the EU have made very substantial progress towards political association and economic integration in recent years.

We want to develop this integration process still further, as long as Georgia continues to show that it is our willing partner accepting EU values and standards. We very much appreciate the readiness of the incoming government team to maintain continuity in these efforts.

We also met representatives of the outgoing government, and the new parliamentary opposition. We impressed upon them how important their role is in a democratic society: it is the role of opposition to hold the government to account, in a constructive way.

We want to use this opportunity to publicly thank, on behalf of the EU, the President Saakashvili and his outgoing government for their record on reforms of which they can be proud; and they can also be proud of the way in which they have handed over the reins of power.

We will shortly meet representatives of Georgian civil society. We will tell them that they should be proud of the role they have played in the development of Georgia's democracy. Their role will remain of crucial importance, as it is in any modern democratic society. We have encouraged the incoming government to engage in a dialogue with civil society.