



**STATEMENT BY THE CHAIR OF THE DELEGATION FOR RELATIONS
WITH THE SOUTH CAUCASUS, MEP Marina KALJURAND**

on the 10th meeting of the EU-Georgia Parliamentary Association Committee

Brussels, 14 February 2022 – *“The European Parliament and the Parliament of Georgia held the 10th meeting of their Parliamentary Association Committee (PAC) on 10 February 2022 in Brussels.*

We noted with satisfaction that support for EU integration remains very high in Georgia, among the population and across party lines.

We welcomed the Georgian authorities’ commitment to further harmonise legislation with the EU acquis in a variety of fields, in line with the Association Agreement, noting nevertheless that the situation could still be improved when it comes to certain areas, including the accountability of law enforcement agencies, the independence of the judiciary and the fight against the discrimination of vulnerable groups and minorities.

We commended the legislative amendments on the introduction of the mandatory gender quotas to increase women’s participation in political life, as well as the adoption of the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

We recognised the swift adoption of the EU’s ambitious Economic and Investment Plan for the Eastern Partners, including Georgia, aimed at fostering trade, growth and jobs, investing in connectivity, strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law, supporting the green and digital transitions, and promoting fair, gender-equal and inclusive societies. We welcomed the EU’s continued financial and technical assistance to Georgia, underlining that further disbursements shall remain conditional on substantial progress on reforms, including when it comes to the rule of law and independence of the judiciary.

We discussed a set of comprehensive reforms that Georgia is undertaking while fulfilling Association Agreement, including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area. We welcomed the considerable progress already made and the Georgian authorities’ willingness to fully exploit the vast potential of the AA/DCFTA, including by creating new openings for gradual political, economic and sectoral integration with the EU.

As our countries are being hit hard by the new wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, we commended the EU’s exemplary solidarity with Georgia in these dire times, providing support to the health sector and facilitating access to vaccines either via the COVAX platform or through direct donations, and we insisted on the need to pursue our cooperation to debunk false narratives.

We acknowledged the fact that all forms of discriminations are prohibited by law in Georgia. Yet, the situation of LGBTQI+ persons remains challenging, as tragically exemplified by the violent attacks against over 50 journalists and peaceful demonstrators that forced the cancellation of the Tbilisi Pride March on 5 July 2021. In this instance, we expect the organisers and perpetrators to be brought to justice, in accordance with Georgia's laws and international commitments.

During our meeting, we also raised concerns about the shortcomings of the 2020 legislative elections and 2021 municipal elections as listed in the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission reports; the continued appointments of Supreme Court judges; the recent reform of the Common Courts; the hasty abolition of the State Inspector's Service; and the slow progress on the Constitutional reform. We recalled that the promised investigations into the wiretapping of wide parts of Georgia's society and of diplomats, including the EU Ambassador, need to deliver clear answers in the near future.

With deep regret, we identified again the polarisation of the political and media landscapes as a major challenge to Georgia's democratic development, and underlined that the 19 April agreement brokered by the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, continues to offer a European way towards building a stronger democracy and the rule of law in Georgia in the interest of the Georgian people. We reiterated the European Parliament's readiness to facilitate a Jean Monnet Dialogue as a way to foster constructive cooperation between political parties in the Parliament of Georgia.

Once again, we reiterated our unwavering support for Georgia's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders, condemned the illegal steps taken by the Russian Federation resulting in further deterioration of the security and human rights situation in the occupied regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali / South Ossetia, commended the Georgian authorities for their pragmatic 'A Step to a Better Future' peace initiative, emphasised the importance of confidence-building between the communities divided by the conflict, and expressed our full support for the EU's endeavours to foster a peaceful resolution of the conflict via the activities of its Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia and of the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia.

Last but not least, as our meeting took place against a background of heightened tensions caused by the Russian Federation's aggressive actions and threats against Ukraine and NATO, we insisted that our partners' chosen Euro-Atlantic path is not aimed against anyone, and that each sovereign country has the right to decide unhindered on its own foreign policy course and security arrangements."

For further information contact:

*Office of Ms Marina KALJURAND, tel. +32 2 284 53 94, e-mail: marina.kaljurand@ep.europa.eu
Eastern Partnership and Russia Unit, tel. +32 2 284 26 43, e-mail: DSCA@ep.europa.eu*