



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

on the 11th meeting of the EU-Georgia Parliamentary Association Committee

Tbilisi, 21 September 2022 – *“The European Parliament and the Parliament of Georgia held the eleventh meeting of their Parliamentary Association Committee (PAC) today in Tbilisi.*

This meeting took place in the aftermath of the European Council’s decision of 23 June to recognise Georgia’s European perspective. As Chair of the EP Delegation for relations with the South Caucasus and Co-Chair of the EU-Georgia PAC, I welcomed wholeheartedly this historic milestone in EU-Georgia relations. I called to seize the unique momentum and do the utmost to address the twelve priorities specified in the Commission’s Opinion on Georgia’s application for EU membership so that Georgia can be recognised as a candidate country as soon as possible. Many of our Georgian friends were disappointed by the fact that their country, unlike Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, was not granted EU candidate status at this stage. I understand and share this disappointment. Yet, I would also like to stress that the window of opportunity is still open and that Georgia can fulfil its firm desire to receive EU candidate status and then EU membership in a longer perspective-

The European Union is much more than an area of economic growth and prosperity, or a compass for technical, legal approximation – it is, above all, a community of values. Georgia has already achieved significant progress which must now be taken to the next level.

We have noted with great satisfaction, during our visit, that support for EU integration remains very high in Georgian society and across party lines. This is already a solid working basis. Therefore, we called on all the Georgian political forces to put their party interests aside and to work together, in a spirit of depolarisation, to meet their citizens’ expectations, in accordance with the twelve key priorities indicated by the European Commission in its Opinion of 17 June 2022, key priorities that reflect the agreement brokered by the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, on 19 April 2021. To facilitate this process, we reiterated the European Parliament’s readiness to offer a wide range of democracy support activities as a way to foster constructive cooperation between political parties in the Parliament of Georgia.

We welcomed the swift establishment of thematic working groups within the Parliament of Georgia. We stressed the importance of ensuring an inclusive process with the participation of the parliamentary opposition and the civil society and therefore called upon all parliamentary groups and factions to join the parliamentary process and engage to address the priorities as a matter of national interest. We asked the ruling party to ensure that said working groups and subsequent work in committees are transparent and inclusive, giving proper consideration to

the views of the opposition parties, allowing their input on substance, and to the expertise of key civil society actors.

As our PAC meeting took place two weeks after the seventh meeting of the EU-Georgia Association Council, we welcomed the renewed commitment by both sides to further strengthen their relations by fully exploiting the potential of the Association Agreement, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, and by implementing the revised Association Agenda for the period 2021-2027 thoroughly.

We encouraged Georgia to intensify efforts - both in spirit and in action - to consolidate democracy and reduce the political polarisation, to strengthen the rule of law, the independence, integrity and accountability of the judiciary and of security agencies, the fight against corruption and excessive influence of vested interests in politics, economics and media, media freedom and human rights – including gender equality and the rights of minority and vulnerable groups. The Georgian authorities need to address all these issues without further ado to show that they are serious about their declared intentions to obtain EU candidate status.

We condemned Russia's despicable, unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine. We were impressed by the solidarity shown by Georgian society, exemplified by massive deliveries of humanitarian aid to Ukrainian villages and cities. We also appreciated the Georgian authorities' political and diplomatic support for Ukraine in international organisations, and invited them to continue taking all appropriate measures to ensure that their country cannot be used by Russian companies to circumvent sanctions.

Once again, we reiterated the EU's unwavering support for Georgia's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders, and condemned the illegal steps taken by the Russian Federation resulting in the further deterioration of the security and human rights situation in the occupied regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali / South Ossetia. We 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 and stressed the importance of the Geneva International Discussions and the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRMs). In this respect, we underlined that none of Georgia's Western partners has ever sought to draw the country into some kind of "second front" against Russia. Conversely, we commended the Georgian authorities for their pragmatic 'A Step to a Better Future' peace initiative and emphasised the importance of people-to-people contacts and confidence-building between the communities divided by the conflict."

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*