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Delegation for relations with the South Caucasus

Joint statement by:

- the Chair of the Delegation for relations with the South Caucasus, MEP Marina KALJURAND, and
- the European Parliament's Standing Rapporteur on Georgia, MEP Sven MIKSER,

on the European Commission recommendation of 8 November 2023 on the EU membership application of Georgia

Brussels, 8 November 2023 – “We welcome today's European Commission recommendation that Georgia be granted the status of EU candidate country on the understanding that it takes concrete steps in nine areas: address the issue of political polarisation; ensure a free, fair and competitive electoral process; improve parliamentary oversight of the security services and strengthen the independence and impartiality of state institutions; implement a comprehensive judicial reform; improve the institutional framework of the fight against corruption; implement the commitment to 'de-oligarchisation'; protect human rights, and notably the rights of vulnerable groups, media workers and civil activists; fight against disinformation and foreign information manipulation and interference against the EU and its values; and improve Georgia's alignment with the EU's common foreign and security policy.

Some of these tasks stem from the twelve priority areas already identified by the European Commission in its opinion on Georgia's application for EU membership of 17 June 2022, while others are new. Particularly, the call to improve the alignment of Georgia's foreign policy with that of the EU reflects Brussels' growing concern with the country's course.

Today's decision is a recognition of the ongoing commitment to the European future of Georgia by the vast majority of its people. We commend the efforts of President Salome Zourabichvili and the strong civil society of Georgia to further this cause. Yet, the Commission's recommendation is a reminder to Georgia's ruling party and government that their work is not yet done. The granting of the candidate status is an important stage on Georgia's European path, which can only lead to success if genuine progress is achieved. We expect the government to deliver the necessary results. We also expect representatives of the government and ruling party to put an end to their verbal attacks against Western partners, including Members of the European Parliament, who only want the best for Georgia.

We reiterate that accession to the EU is, for all countries, a merit-based process, conditioned on strict criteria. In many ways, the 2024 parliamentary elections will be a major democracy test for Georgia.

The EU-Georgia Parliamentary Association Committee will continue to scrutinise closely the advancement of reforms in Georgia.”

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