

# *EaR Looking beyond the 2017 Summit*

*Archil Karaulashvili, First Deputy State Minister of Georgia\_Talking Points*

## The Eastern Partnership as a successful EU policy: Where we are before the Summit

- It is my great pleasure to join today's event that is an **important occasion to review the actual state of play of the Eastern Partnership ahead of its upcoming Summit to be held in November 2017 in Brussels** and assess the possibilities of enhancing cooperation between the European Union and its eastern partners.
- I am honored to be included among the distinguished speakers and have the possibility to discuss the latest political and geopolitical developments, current **situation in the EaP countries**, to **present Georgia's accomplishments and challenges on its way to European integration** and share **our vision for further enhancement of political and economic cooperation between the European Union and its eastern partners**.
- I am privileged to address you on behalf of **one of the strongest EU enthusiast countries** where the support of Georgian population for EU steadily increases.
- According to the recently released 2017 annual OPEN opinions polls of the EU for Eastern Partnership countries, **83% of Georgian population having positive attitude towards relations with the European Union** (75% in 2016).
- This rising confidence in Europe and Georgia's European path is the result of enhanced and ever extensive cooperation between the EU and Georgia. Significant **milestones reached on Georgia's European Way** include but are not limited to:
  - ✓ Entry into force of the **EU-Georgia Association Agreement & DCFTA**;
  - ✓ Entry into force of the **Visa Free Regime with the EU**;
  - ✓ Georgia's accession to the **Energy Community**.
- The consultations on the **new Association Agenda**, setting out ambitious priorities for the next years (2017-2020) have been concluded.
- As part of the implementation of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement, among other fields, significant progress has been achieved in development of democratic institutions, independence of judiciary, freedom of media, fight against corruption, protection of human rights and protection of property rights, trade, agriculture, regional policy and education.
- Today, **the evidences of our achievements could be found also in international rankings. Georgia is constantly improving its positions in acclaimed**

**international rankings**, assessing the factors affecting the economic growth, business environment, stability of institutions, state of corruption, freedom of media, etc.

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- We have **enhanced institutional capacities in the state agencies and we are strengthening the internal coordination & implementation mechanisms** to ensure effective implementation of the Association Agreement:
  - ✓ Starting from 2018, we are planning to introduce a **medium-term planning tool** (3 Years Action Plan) for the implementation of the Association Agreement and the Association Agenda;
  - ✓ **An electronic monitoring system (e-monitoring) for the implementation of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement** has been developed, allowing effective planning and decent management of information related to the implementation of the AA obligations.
- At the same time, we strongly believe that effective implementation of the Association Agreement as well as attainment of our goals and aspirations heavily depend on **active involvement and participation of all parts of our society**. In this complex process, experience, expertise as well as links provided by the civil society cannot be underestimated. Open and inclusive governance is our priority.
- With that in mind, we have **involved civil society organizations in the planning & implementation process of the Association Agreement and we are committed to ensure further active engagement of the civil society and to streamline transparency of the process of implementation of the Association Agreement**.

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- Till the end of this year, we have a central event ahead of us. The **upcoming EaP Summit bears a high priority to keep the political importance of the EaP**.
- A **multi-track and multi-speed process is a reality in the EaP**: We build successful differentiated partnerships according to our interests. While seeking ways to engage with all partners, **we believe that the EU should be also more flexible and translate the differentiation principle into offering ways for deeper integration to the associated countries**. This will continue to serve as a powerful incentive for fundamental changes in these countries.
- We welcome the **“20 Deliverables for 2020” document**, which serves as a roadmap towards more concrete cooperation and is oriented on delivering practical results for the citizens. However, with a view to the proposed milestones for 2020, I should underline that **Georgia is already quite advanced in number of areas**.

- As regards to Georgia's priorities for the upcoming EaP Summit, we will be focusing on following main directions: **Political Deliverables, Practical Deliverables and Cooperation on Security & Stability.**
- In terms of **Political Deliverables:**
  - ❖ Georgia considers that the Summit Declaration should **acknowledge the European Choice and the European Aspirations of associated partners** and, at the same time, underline further integration prospects.
  - ❖ Having regard to the Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union, the Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit held in Riga, the Rome Declaration of the leaders of 27 member states and of the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission of 25 March 2017, it is of **crucial importance to provide a political deliverable** at the Summit in forms of **reiterating the EU readiness to keep the doors open for willing EaP partners that respect joint democratic values.**
  - ❖ Georgia considers that the Summit Declaration should reiterate EUs and its Member States' **firm support for the principle of sovereignty and territorial integrity** within internationally recognized borders and a commitment to peaceful conflict resolution.
- In terms of **Practical Deliverables:**
  - ❖ Taking into account the ambitious agenda of reforms, current challenges and the needs for more comprehensive and target oriented support, as well as given the high absorption capacity of Georgia, we deem it necessary to **consider the formation of a new, broader, more swift and flexible supporting tool – "Association Instrument"**.
  - ❖ Enhance **regular sectoral dialogue between European and Georgian counterparts** in order to create new opportunities for Georgia's sectoral development in accordance with the European policies.
  - ❖ After launching the visa free movement for Georgian citizens to the EU, we identify the possibility for **further developing cooperation in the field of migration and mobility.** In this context **circular migration**, as further incentive to mobility, between the partners and the EU member states should be promoted and concrete schemes implemented.
  - ❖ We deem it necessary to support **fostering links between businesses and bringing European investments to Georgia** in order to expand and further increase trade with the EU and achieve market integration.
  - ❖ Establishing effective interconnections is necessary to create firm ties and enhance cooperation between EU and its eastern partners. Therefore **development of transport, energy and communication infrastructures** in Georgia and its integration into the TEN-E and TEN-T is of utmost importance. In

this respect, the potential of the Southern Corridor and among others the energy projects which are directly linking the Caspian Region with the EU, should be duly taken into consideration and supported through additional investments.

- ❖ Taking into consideration the focus placed by ENP review on **Education, research and Innovation**, cooperation in these fields should be further enhanced. New opportunities should be provided among others through programs such as Erasmus+, Horizon 2020 and EU4Innovation and through **opening the European School in Georgia**.
- In terms of **cooperation on Security & Stability**, various possibilities of enhancing the cooperation should be explored:
  - ❖ **Defense capabilities and security sector reforms** should be supported; Cooperation on **Cyber Security** should be enhanced.
  - ❖ **Cooperation under CSDP** should be further enhanced: We would greatly benefit through EUs active support in the process of preparation for the deployment in the CSDP missions.
  - ❖ We deem it necessary to intensify the cooperation with EU and MSs on **strategic communications** to jointly counter anti-western propaganda.
- Hereby, let me also underline that being a reliable partner of the EU, Georgia shares the commitments and contributes to common European security. **Since 1999, Georgian military and civil forces have been participating in international peace support and coalition operation** – Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan, Mali, Central African Republic, and Ukraine. Hence, **Georgia is an active participant, an effective contributor to the Common Security and Defence Policy of the EU**.
- Last but not least, let me underline that **Georgia does not see the EaP solely as a cooperation format with the EU. It is also a tool that allows the six countries to build closer ties among each other**.
- In this spirit, **together with special emphasize on differentiation, it is important for us to ensure deeper involvement of the non-Associated countries in the Eastern Partnership format**. We support the idea of identifying areas of mutual interests with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus, even if these countries currently may not seek closer ties with the EU.

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- In the light of increasing anti-western propaganda, **Strategic communication on Georgia's European and Euro-Atlantic integration constitutes one of the top priorities of the Government of Georgia**.
- The Government of Georgia in close cooperation with the civil society has elaborated and adopted the **"Communication Strategy of the Government of Georgia on**

**Georgia's EU and NATO Membership for 2017-2020''** and the relevant Action Plan for 2017.

- **With the view to the upcoming EaP Summit, we attach high importance to the strategic communication campaign** with the aim of providing accurate information to our citizens and **managing expectations.**

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- We are optimistic on further enhancement of cooperation under EaP format building even closer ties with EU and EaP States relatively.
- **Georgia is strongly committed to its European aspirations for fostering security, stability and prosperity on the basis of shared European values.**