

Mamuka Mdinardze Asserts End of Need for Gender Quotas in Georgia

By Liza Mchedlidze

Mamuka Mdinardze, the leader of the majority, stated that the country has progressed to a point where artificial interventions like gender quotas are no longer required. Instead, he advocated for a future where women gain entry into the Parliament of Georgia based on merit and professionalism.

"You know, the topic of women's quotas is a temporary positive measure at a certain stage of the country's development... If someone thinks that we are not at a stage of development to navigate it well, they are very mistaken. The main premise, with which we would agree with Girchi's initiative, is that from now on, women should enter the Parliament of Georgia, especially in the future, based on merit and professionalism, not quotas. This should also apply to electoral bodies in local government," Mdinardze said.

As confirmed at the press conference, the majority will support Girchi's initiative regarding changes in the election code.

Mdinardze emphasized that it's time to abolish gender quotas, as women should be admitted to political positions based on merit alone. He asserted that Georgian women have the freedom to express themselves and pursue their rights without discrimination, particularly in politics.

He also stated that discrimination against women in politics is "non-existent".



tent".

"The bottom line is that after a period of time, it should be abolished. That time is now, and women should get in based on merit. It is high time that we eliminate these artificial interventions and acknowledge that we are at a stage of

development where women do not need assistance from artificial tools,

Women have absolute freedom to express themselves. They have the absolute freedom to realize their rights. Women are very capable in any direction. Georgian women in Georgia no longer have

the problem of becoming subjects of discrimination, especially in politics.

In politics and public life, no woman has a problem with becoming a subject of discrimination, especially because she is a woman. It is an impossible story," said Mdinardze.

Georgian Dream Supports Girchi Initiative to Remove Gender Quotas from Election Code

By Liza Mchedlidze

Girchi has proposed an initiative to amend the election code by eliminating all legal provisions that require the consideration of gender quotas when compiling candidate lists. Specifically, the party is calling for the complete removal of Article 203 from the law, which mandates parties to adhere to gender quotas in parliamentary lists.

According to the initiators, the gender quota mechanism constitutes a restriction for both political parties and for the representatives of the gender for whom this norm was created to empower.

"The formation of political party lists based on gender lacks logical content; with such artificial intervention, women's involvement in politics will never take a serious form. The purpose of the bill is to assist women in politics in avoiding the reputational damage caused by quotas. Gender-based quotas further reinforce existing stereotypes against women, making it difficult to perceive them as proper political players." Girchi's statement reads.

The proposed amendments in the bill will be backed by the ruling party. During the Bureau session, discussions centered on a meeting between Girchi and the majority leaders, where Georgian Dream fully endorsed the changes. Beka

Davituliani highlighted that, in exchange, the ruling party received a commitment from Girchi to prioritize "professionalism and conscientiousness" in the process of electing the chairman of the CEC.

The bureau supported the notion that the changes should be considered in an accelerated manner this week. Girchi leader Iago Khvichia also urged the opposition to lend their support to the initiative.

As per the current election code, ratified by the Parliament on July 2, 2020, parties are mandated to include candidates of both genders in their proportional lists, ensuring that every fourth candidate is of a different gender.

The deputy of the parliamentary majority, Vice-Speaker of the Parliament Archil Talakvadze, clarified Georgian Dream's backing of Girchi's proposal to eliminate gender quotas in electoral lists. He emphasized that Georgian Dream will ensure substantial representation of women in the list.

"As the ruling party, our support for women's involvement in politics and their participation will not weaken; on the contrary, this support will increase in the future.

Regarding this opposition initiative, I would like to present some arguments to



Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.6897; Euro - 2.8998; GBP - 3.3920; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.9094; Swiss Franc - 2.9823

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our society. First - when we adopted the principle of quotas at the time, we stated that it was a temporary measure, and its necessity would expire at some point.

Secondly, while this change

would be supported and accepted, any political party has complete freedom to include more women in its party list.

The stance of Georgian Dream is that it will ensure significant representation of women in the next parliamentary list.

Thirdly, within Georgian

Dream, we have already established a strong and successful women's organization, which unites many accomplished women involved in politics throughout the country. Their voices are heard louder, and their participation is substantially higher today than in the past.

Actually, for us, this change is not so important that we would block this initiative from the opposition.

In addition, as you know, in order to conduct the elections in a neutral and transparent manner, it is necessary to reach an agreement between the majority

and the opposition regarding the candidacy of the CEC chairman. Therefore, the first priority today is to achieve as wide a consensus as possible in the process of staffing the CEC. Girchi has already expressed its position that it will be part of this consensus," said Talakvadze.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Parliamentary Majority 'Categorically Demands' U.S. Embassy to Lift Sanctions on Georgian Judges



The parliamentary majority called upon the Embassy of the United States of America to engage in dialogue and lift the sanctions imposed by the states on Georgian judges.

"Until now, we have not seen any evidence that would confirm even the relevance of these sanctions, if not the real basis of the sanctions," said Mamuka Mdinardze, the leader of the majority.

According to him, the sanctioning of several judges in Geor-

ment, and its affiliates.

"We are categorical in this request or demand that their sanctions be lifted and that our friend does not give the right to manipulate this fact to any wicked and evil entity in Georgia," Mdinardze said.

Lelo to Adhere to Current Legal Framework for Parliamentary Elections Amidst Girchi's Initiative

Davit Usupashvili, representing the Lelo party, stated that despite the proposed changes, they will present their party list for the parliamentary elections in accordance with the current legal framework. He described the Girchi initiative to abolish quotas as a "Georgian Dream project."

"Lelo will submit a party list for the parliamentary elections according to the model established by the legislative base today, regardless of the duration or speed of implementation, even if the Dream-Girchi agreement, which you yourself describe as

moral-political, is realized quickly.

Not only because we supported it at the time, but also because we deem it necessary at this stage. Years will pass, and it will no longer be deemed necessary.

Meanwhile, from now on, I

cannot refer to this project as the 'Girchi' project; it is now a 'Dream' project. This is because the idea of 'Girchi' would remain just an idea if it weren't for the political intention of the 'Dream,'" Usupashvili said.



Zero Waste Day in Tbilisi Georgia Strides Towards Clean and Healthy Environment

TBILISI. 1 April 2024 – Tbilisi's Mziuri Park came alive on 30 March as hundreds of people gathered to celebrate the International Day of Zero Waste, marking a step towards a cleaner, greener, and healthier lifestyle in Georgia.

Organized by the Caucasus Environmental NGOs Network (CENN), in partnership with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, and

supported by the European Union, Norway, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the day-long event drew guests, participants, and organizers alike to engage in interactive and educational activities promoting sustainable practices.

Highlights of the event included:

- Games and quizzes catering to both children and adults.

- Exchange corners facilitating the redistribution of clothes and books.

- Recycling and separation stations where local enterprises collected plastic and paper waste for recycling.

- A business fair showcasing environmental practices spearheaded by Georgian companies.

"We are excited to host the International Day of Zero Waste

in Tbilisi as part of our ongoing 'End Plastic Pollution' campaign! The overwhelming response underscores public commitment to a cleaner environment," said Nana Takvarelia, CENN Project Manager.

"The concept of zero waste involves recycling any type of waste and turning it into a new resource. Modern waste management practices have already been introduced through the Extended Producers' Responsibility (EPR) on the following four waste streams: tyres, batteries and accumulators, electrical and electronic equipment and oils. It's important to increase public awareness and engagement throughout this process," noted Irma Gurguliani, Deputy Head of the Waste and Chemicals Management Department at the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia.

Lela Akiashvili, UNDP Project Manager, emphasized the need for a concerted effort to combat plastic pollution.

"We need a comprehensive approach involving national and local authorities, businesses, civil society, and experts. However, it all begins with people embracing the vision of a pollution-free world and uniting to safeguard their environmental rights."

Background Information:

Humanity generates over 2 billion tonnes of municipal solid waste annually, with approximately 2.7 billion people lacking access to proper waste management. This waste crisis exacerbates climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, posing significant threats to human well-being and economic prosperity. Without swift action, municipal solid waste generation is projected to reach 3.8 billion

tonnes by 2050. (Source: UN-Habitat. 2023)

In Georgia, plastic production and imports have surged by 71 percent over the past decade, resulting in widespread illegal dumpsites, particularly in rural areas. Plastic accounts for over 95 percent of litter accumulated on Georgia's beaches. In 2020, up to 93 percent of produced and imported plastic items in Georgia ended up as waste contributing to environmental pollution. (Sources: World Bank. 2021. EU/UNDP EMBLAS Project)

In response, UNDP and Norway, in partnership with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture and CENN, launched an initiative to promote robust policies, enhance coordination, and foster engagement towards a plastic-free Georgia, ensuring every citizen's right to a clean and healthy environment.

Weather

Tuesday, April 2

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 21°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 8°C

Wednesday, April 3

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 22°C

Night Mostly Cloudy
Low: 11°C

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43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi, 0108, Georgia
Founded by Prof.

Zaza Gachechiladze

Tamar Gachechiladze
Publisher

Mob.: +995 599 565621; +995 577 760000
E-mail: messenger@messenger.com.ge
http://www.messenger.com.ge/

Nino Metreveli
Commercial Director

Mariam Mchedlidze
Editor-in-Chief

Khatuna Gogichaishvili
Layout Designer, Photographer

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