

Tbilisi, 15 March 2013

Honorable Prime Minister

The unprecedented and partisan statements of some European MPs both ahead, during, and after the Parliamentary elections in Georgia (e.g., the address of 6 March 2013) urge me to write this personal letter to you.

As friend of Georgia and as a critical analyst of the developments in your country I can tell you that the addresses, letters, and statements do not reflect the political reality in Georgia at all. Yesterday's open letter is an excellent answer and perfectly expresses the grievances and feelings of the Georgian people. As a Prime Minister you may be obliged to react in clear words to such kind of false attributions to the new and democratically legitimized Government of Georgia. I would say there is not even a need to respond to such kind of superficial assessments and – as it seems – concerted propaganda of some misguided European MPs. It is interesting to see how much some members of the EPP adapted from ancient soviet-style propagandistic methods – methods, they would publicly deny of course.

Indeed, Georgia is much freer than it ever used to be in the past and it is much freer than any country in the neighborhood. When I talk to citizens of Georgia they feel free, they are without any fear, and they are full of hope about a democratic future of their own country. While UNM launched a democratic revolution in Georgia, Georgian Dream will have to ensure the broadening and deepening of the democratization process; in the near future it is crucially important that democratic values are implemented in the everyday life of any Georgian citizen. That's why a vast majority of people voted for your coalition and why citizens trust you personally as a Prime Minister.

The elections of October 1, 2012 indicated a remarkable performance of the still young Georgian democracy and its citizens. A majority decided to vote the Rose revolutionaries out of office because they were about to leave the democratic path in order to become a rather authoritarian modernization regime. Citizens were afraid that one day the ballot paper may prove to be too weak a weapon against growing control of the society. It has to be recognized that there are not many such cases where revolutionaries had to leave be-

cause of democratic elections and where the revolutionary leadership had no choice but to accept the verdict of the majority.

It is true: one cannot overestimate what the previous UNM government achieved when it managed to eradicate the old system of corruption in Georgia; as a matter of fact corruption is like cancer: it is lethal for any democratic and wealthy society. That is the reason why your government that got so much democratic support has now the huge and difficult task to eliminate the system of so-called elite corruption including the misspending of taxpayers' money and the transfer of finances abroad. Only if corruption is entirely eradicated the society can enjoy a healthy and sustainable economic and social development.

Between the false alternative of tolerating a culture of impunity on the one hand and blank amnesty for all crimes on the other there is only one "red line". This red line is marked by the law and nothing else but the democratically legitimized and internationally monitored law. The adherence of law helps to avoid several pitfalls and traps such as politicized prosecution, court trials on weak ground, or crusades of revenge.

I observe a strong political will on your side to perform according to the law and to internationally established standards. The fact that you ask the advice of outstanding members of the civil society (GYLA) or of well respected and highly professional international experts – such as Thomas Hammarberg – indicates that you are serious about pledges made during and after the elections. The dialogue with the civil society, the business sector, the international community, as well as the political opposition is crucial in order to underline the democratic character of far-reaching reforms that were announced by the new Government. Similarly, the institution of the Ombudsman for Human Rights got strengthened, too.

The performance of the Parliament as well as of the Ministries – after 100 days in office – is quite remarkable, too. The Parliament for the first time in Georgian history became a space of real political debates, of sound legislation, and of joint projects of both majority and minority; as an example I would like to cite the recently released comprehensive 19-Point Resolution on Foreign Policy. At the same time I am quite impressed by the reforms that take shape in many ministries: there are new strategies and concepts, innovative programs and projects, as well as processes in institution and capacity building. Very importantly, I experience a very active and professional Minister of Agriculture as an excellent partner of Swiss Development Cooperation. Also Ministries such as Finances, Economy, Regional Development, Defense, Environment, Reconciliation and Civil Engagement as well as of course the MFA are on their way to perform well; for sure the dialogue between the ministries and the international community proves to be open, constructive, and fruitful. I personally appreciate very much your approach towards empowering the village, developing a sustainable and environmentally friendly agriculture in a more decentralized political environment, and economic growth based on local resources.

Furthermore, you managed within a short period of time to change the tone in Georgian relations with your neighbor in the north. You nominated a Special Representative who in the meantime met twice with his Russian counterpart. Both Envoys trust each other; they agreed to avoid red lines and to concentrate on doable small steps. I sincerely hope that your Government will also be able to improve relations with the de facto authorities in Abkhazia and South-Ossetia in order to search some common ground for the people on either side of the ABLs. As you know Switzerland is always at your disposal in order to help facilitate cooperation in a more peaceful region of Southern Caucasus.

I can fully understand that cohabitation may not at all be the most welcomed outcome of democratic elections. At the same time cohabitation is to be seen as yet another transitional process that offers a lot of learning opportunities. At the end of a period of cohabitation the democratic process may be more sustainable, the competition among a plurality of political parties more constructive, and the political culture more open for substantial dialogues and debates about the future of a country. I kindly ask you to study my short article on both the bad and to good sides of cohabitation which was published in THE MESSENGER today (*attached*).

Any government anywhere in the world makes mistakes. I would say some governments would better care about their own crises at home instead of arrogantly teaching lessons to others. The question is how governments deal with mistakes made; and here I see big differences indeed. If a government is modest, admits mistakes, searches for improvements, allows media to be critical about governmental actions, ask the civil society for advices and support, then citizens tend to be tolerant and will allow a government to learn from its mistakes. I am confident that you are well aware of mistakes that happened during the last 100 days or so and that you use all your energy and wisdom to avoid such mistakes in the future.

Before the elections some political figures in Georgia accused me of being politically biased towards the opposition. Yes, it may be true that I am indeed biased. I never hid that I am biased towards democracy, human rights, and peaceful relations as I always was during my diplomatic and academic career. If you invite a Swiss diplomat as a trustworthy facilitator you must always be sure about his democratic values. The choice between political programs, between UNM, GD and eventually other parties has to be made solely by the Georgian citizens and voters themselves – neither by me as a foreign diplomat nor by any European MPs either.

If I ever interfered in Georgian affairs I do apologize with the Georgian citizens. I will certainly refrain from doing so again.

I am looking forward to continue our open and frank exchange. Thank you very much indeed for all your efforts to continue the democratization process and to help Georgians to make their way of living.

Take care,

Guenther Baechler