

Speech of the Vice-Prime Minister,
State Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration

ENP Conference, Brussels
September 3, 2007

Dear Colleagues, honourable Guests,

- Strengthening and deepening relations with the European Union is a top priority for Georgia. This is a partnership based on our shared European values and our profound mutual interests.
- In our view, ENP is an appropriate framework to realize our common goals. However, ENP is still in an experimental stage. We must ensure, through honest and direct dialogues such as this, that it works efficiently and to mutual benefit. Only this way can we learn if ENP responds to the actual challenges facing our countries.
- I would also like to underscore that the success of ENP depends crucially on developments within the EU as well. As such, we are following with keen interest the Union's treaty discussions--and hope we will have the opportunity to learn more about this from you.
- I would like to focus on three major goals that we expect ENP to address for the benefit of both Georgia and the EU.
 - First, improving border control and management so that we can proceed with a visa facilitation agreement, while ensuring the secure movement of people and preventing trafficking.
 - Second, implementing a free trade agreement that can help both the Georgian and the EU economies to grow.

- Third, using ENP as a platform for advancing regional integration and security.
- Of special concern to Georgia is simplifying its visa regime with the EU. We have made serious progress on readmission talks with EU Member States and are ready to start a dialogue on an EU readmission agreement.
- Moreover, we have followed with great interest the Commission's proposals on "Circular Migration and Mobility Partnerships" and my government stands ready to be a pilot partner for these initiatives.
- Meanwhile, I am sure you are aware of the severe political problems associated with the EU-Russia visa accords. These send a dangerous political signal to the residents of the conflict regions in Georgia and undermine our peacemaking efforts.
- This issue is of great relevance to our ENP action plan, both in the context of border security and the conflict zones. As such, we trust the EU will take all necessary measures to redress this matter in a timely manner.
- In the context of the conflicts, we trust that the EU will be a more active partner in the peacekeeping and negotiation process, as envisaged in the ENP; we are at a crucial and promising moment, when timely and wise action is essential.
- Concerning trade liberalization: Free trade is an important catalyst for closer EU-Georgia economic cooperation. We expect the results of the ongoing EU-Georgia FTA feasibility study to be positive and lead us to a Deep Free Trade Agreement.
- In terms of regional cooperation, the Commission's "Black Sea Synergy" initiative can speed the "Europeanization of the Black Sea," which is

critical to our mutual energy, transport, and defense goals. The institutions of GUAM and BSEC are crucial for this effort.

- We believe that the European aspirations of the EU's Neighbours will be recognized and that, in due time, this will lead these countries to Enhanced /Associated Agreements with the European Union.
- Georgia is committed not only to its own European integration, but to strengthening cooperation between the EU and our regions—the Black Sea, the Caucasus, and, looking east, the Caspian and Central Asia. In this context, I would like to make sure you are aware of the Tbilisi Summit, to which you are all invited, and which will take place on November 1-2. The theme of the Summit is “Building Europe's East” and it will focus on regional cooperation, energy security, and resolving conflicts.
- Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the organizers of today's important and useful conference. My government would like to propose that such gatherings take place on a regular basis in the capitals of ENP states. We would be delighted to host such an event.