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## **GEORGIAN AND BULGARIAN FOREIGN MINISTRIES HAVE HELD POLITICAL CONSULTATIONS**

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Georgia Today (12 October 2018)

Sofia hosted another round of political consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Georgia and Bulgaria. The Georgian delegation was led by Deputy Foreign Minister Vakhtang Makharoblishvili while Deputy Foreign Minister Yuri Sterk headed the Bulgarian delegation.

The sides spoke about the agenda of bilateral, as well as multilateral co-operation between Georgia and Bulgaria. Special mention was taken of the close and friendly relations between the two countries based on strong people-to-people contacts. Vakhtang Makharoblishvili thanked Yuri Sterk for his governments firm support for Georgias sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as for Bulgarias contribution to the EUMM that is the only functioning international mechanism on the ground. The Deputy Minister placed high value Bulgarias important contribution towards advancing Georgias European and Euro-Atlantic integration process. In this context, the role of the Bulgarian embassy in Tbilisi as one of NATOs liaison embassy was also highlighted.

While on the theme of bilateral relations, the sides gave positive appraisal to the relations at the political level. The necessity of intensifying high-level visits was also mentioned. Talking points included prospects for the development of trade-economic co-operation. The importance of the Georgia-Bulgaria Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Co-operation was also highlighted. The sides agreed to schedule next meeting of the Commission in Bulgaria, for early 2019.

The sides singled out for special mention the transport and energy potential of the two countries owing to the strategic location of Georgia and Bulgaria providing a link between Europe and Asia. In this light, the Deputy Ministers stressed the need to further activate ferry traffic between the Georgian and Bulgarian ports and to establish new routes.

Special attention was paid to the relations with the European Union. Vakhtang Makharoblishvili congratulated Bulgaria on its successful presidency of the EU Council. For his part, Yuri Sterk highly appraised Georgias EU integration progress and pledged the country further support on this path.

Discussions also focused on Georgias NATO integration process. Black Sea security issues and, in this light, Georgia-NATO co-operation, were also highlighted during the consultations.

Atop the agenda of the consultations was also the situation in Georgias occupied territories.

Vakhtang Makharoblishvili brought to the attention of the Bulgarian side the security challenges and difficult humanitarian situation on the ground, facts of creeping annexation and human rights violations, the so-called treaties signed by Russia with the occupation regimes. The importance of the Geneva International Discussions and the decisive role the EU plays in realizing the Georgian Governments peace initiatives was also highlighted.

The Bulgarian delegation reaffirmed Bulgarias staunch support for Georgias sovereignty and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognized borders.

The sides agreed to keep up the impetus of intense co-operation in the future.

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