
PRESIDENT OF PACE PAYS CEREMONIAL VISIT TO GEORGIA

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Liliane Maury Pasquier, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), conducted an official working visit to Georgia on April 29 and 30. The visit was made to honor the 20th anniversary of Georgias accession to the Council of Europe.

While in Tbilisi, she met with several Georgian governmental leaders: President Salome Zurbashvili, Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze, Speaker of the Parliament Irakli Kobakhidze, Minister of Foreign Affairs Davit Zalkaliani and members of the Georgian delegation to PACE.

On Tuesday, Maury Pasquier addressed the Georgian Parliament during a session dedicated to the 20th anniversary of Georgia's Council of Europe accession. During her speech at the Parliamentary session, she congratulated Georgia on 20 years of solid progress, saying Georgias accession to the Council of Europe 20 years ago was a major step in consolidating democratic institutions and a huge boost for reforms in several important areas...[since joining the Council of Europe], it is a more stable Georgia, based on strong democratic institutions, that is preparing to chair the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe from November 2019 to May 2020. She highlighted the significant progress made in the fight against corruption, judiciary reform, and the smooth functioning of Parliament, noting that Georgias progress has been due to strong political will and consistent efforts from all of Georgias institutions, along with input from Council of Europe bodies and experts, the Council of Europe press agency reports.

Addressing the Georgian Parliament, Maury Pasquier also predicted a strong continuing relationship between the parties. I am sure that this close co-operation will be further strengthened over the next 20 years, that Georgia will continue to take advantage of our expertise and put our recommendations into action, and that the Council of Europe will continue to benefit from Georgias experience and achievements, she said.

After a closed-door meeting between Kobakhidze and Maury Pasquier, in a joint statement to the press on Monday afternoon, Kobakhidze emphasized the value of the actions undertaken by the Council of Europe in the development of democracy in Georgia. Maury Pasquier pledged the Council of Europes support for Georgias conflict resolution processes. We will continue to search for ways to resolve the conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, especially to establish contact between peoples. There is the opportunity to learn more and take steps forward, said Maury Pasquier.

Later that afternoon, she visited the settlement for IDPs (internally displaced persons) in Tserovani and the village of Odzisi on the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) with the occupied territory of the Tskhinvali district. Maury Pasquier was given detailed information on the situation and the ABL and conditions for IDPs living in temporary settlements – already for more than 10 years now. She made no comments in relation to the visit. Some oppositional political voices raised the question as to why no visits were scheduled between Maury Pasquier and opposition parties. She has not come here to study the local political situation, said Vice-Speaker of Parliament Tamar Chugoshvili, adding that the PACE President did not express an interest in meeting with the political opposition or civil society representatives, only senior government officials during the ceremonial visit.

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