



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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PRESSE 548

13th EU-Georgia Cooperation Council

The European Union and Georgia held the thirteenth annual meeting of their Cooperation Council on 18 December 2012 in Brussels. The EU was represented by Dr Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus, who chaired the Cooperation Council on behalf of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, and by Štefan Füle, Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy. The Georgian delegation was represented by Dr Maia Panjikidze, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and by Alex Petriashvili, State Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration.

This Cooperation Council was the first to take place since Georgia's new government took office following the parliamentary elections of 1 October 2012. The EU congratulated the Georgian side on this democratic landmark, and looked forward to further consolidation and development of Georgia's democracy ahead of the presidential elections in 2013, including through constructive cohabitation between the Prime Minister and President. The EU will continue to support Georgia, as a key partner, in these efforts.

The EU and Georgia discussed the role of strong democratic institutions in underpinning political pluralism, media freedom, and an independent judiciary. The EU stressed the importance of ensuring that criminal prosecutions are conducted in a transparent and impartial manner, free of political motivation. The EU also flagged penal reform as a priority issue, requiring urgent action and sustained attention.

The two sides discussed recent developments in conflict resolution in Georgia. The EU welcomed the first direct talks between Georgia and the Russian Federation since 2008. The EU also welcomed the fact that Georgia has signalled its intention to adopt a flexible approach towards engagement with the breakaway regions. The EU reconfirmed its support for Georgia's territorial integrity and its commitment to conflict resolution efforts in Georgia, including through its co-chairmanship of the Geneva International Talks, and through the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia.

P R E S S

Both sides looked ahead to next year's Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius, and at the busy schedule of EU-Georgia engagement. Both sides welcomed the good progress being made in negotiations for an Association Agreement and a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area. The EU restated its commitment to political association and economic integration with Georgia, and to improved mobility for its citizens.
