



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL
THE PRESIDENT**



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**Remarks by President of the European Council
Herman Van Rompuy
following his meeting with Prime Minister of Georgia
Irakli Garibashvili**

It is with great pleasure that I welcome Prime Minister Garibashvili on his first official visit to Brussels. The partnership between the European Union and Georgia is strong. Today we reflected on the progress we have made and looked ahead to the future of this very broad and deep relationship. We discussed a wide range of issues covering all aspects of our extensive engagement.

One of our main objectives this year is to sign the Association Agreement, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, which we initialled in Vilnius last November. We agreed on the need to respect sovereign countries' freedom of choice on foreign policy, regional economic cooperation and trade.

The Prime Minister informed me about the major changes that have taken place recently in Georgian politics - a new President, a new Prime Minister, and a new constitution. I encouraged Georgia to continue to pay attention to political pluralism and media freedom. Criminal prosecutions have to be evidence-based, impartial and fully in line with democratic values.

The European Union places a high importance on the rights of people belonging to minorities. The adoption of the anti-discrimination law is important in order to make progress in the visa liberalisation dialogue.

P R E S S

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The European Union welcomes the signing of a Framework Participation Agreement on CSDP cooperation, which will enhance our cooperation in Common Security and Defence Policy and enable Georgia's participation in EU-led crisis management operations.

The Prime Minister informed me about recent developments in conflict resolution in Georgia. The European Union welcomes the continuing diplomatic contacts between Georgia and the Russian Federation as an important contribution to assuring stability and security for the region. I expressed the European Union's concern at ongoing activities to erect physical barriers to free movement within Georgian territory.

I reconfirmed the European Union's support for Georgia's territorial integrity and our commitment to support conflict resolution in Georgia, including through our co-chairmanship of the Geneva International Talks and our Monitoring Mission in Georgia.

To conclude, let me once again Mr Prime Minister thank you for your visit and for your efforts to advance the political association and economic integration with the European Union and I will be glad to visit Tbilisi in the upcoming months.
