

# GEORGIA UPDATE

WEEKLY EDITION • 3 November 2011

A Publication of the Government of Georgia

[www.georgiaupdate.gov.ge](http://www.georgiaupdate.gov.ge)

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Support for Georgia’s reforms and Euro-Atlantic integration efforts will be a key theme during next week’s visit to Georgia by NATO’s North Atlantic Council, said James Appathurai, the NATO Secretary General’s Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia. “I am quite sure that President Saakashvili and the leadership of the country will hear from the NAC that they are very positive on the reform progress that Georgia has achieved over the past year,” he said. Appathurai also thanked Georgia for its steadfast troop commitment to NATO-led operations in Afghanistan. The upcoming visit by NATO’s senior decision-making body will be its first since Russia’s 2008 invasion.

## QUOTES OF THE WEEK

“I am quite sure that President Saakashvili and the leadership of the country will hear from the North Atlantic Council that they are very positive on the reform progress that Georgia has achieved over the past year.”

♦ James Appathurai, the NATO Secretary General’s Special Representative for the Caucasus

“France takes note with satisfaction of the progress achieved by Russia and Georgia in their discussions, under Swiss mediation, regarding Russia’s entry to the World Trade Organization. We particularly welcome Georgia’s agreement to the latest proposals put forth by the Swiss mediator. We reaffirm our full support to Russia’s accession to the WTO, and hope that the Russian authorities will soon agree to these propositions.”

♦ French Ministry of Foreign Affairs

“What you have on the table from the Swiss is a very reasonable offer, and it represents real Georgian concessions. If the Russians are serious and want WTO, this is a good deal for them. This will smoke them out a little bit.”

♦ Damon Wilson, Vice President, Atlantic Council

## INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

**NEW YORK TIMES:** Georgians suggest WTO deal for Russia is near

**FOREIGN POLICY:** Georgia to Russia on WTO—Take it or leave it

**AFP:** Georgia agrees “final proposal” in Russia WTO talks

**NEWSWEEK:** Russia’s next move on WTO

**BLOOMBERG:** Boehner says Russia’s WTO approval depends on Georgia

**NEWSWEEK/DAILY BEAST:** Obama’s Russia reset a “disaster”

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**EURASIA DAILY MONITOR:** Ivanishvili—equidistance between West and Russia

**EUROPOLITICS:** EP committee adopts recommendations on ties with Tbilisi

**CANADIAN PRESS:** Did Canada punish Russia for 2008 Georgia invasion?

**GLOBE & MAIL:** Our big fat Georgian family

**LOS ANGELES TIMES:** Nino Machaidze’s star turn

## UPCOMING MILESTONES

**Nov. 9-10:** NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen and North Atlantic Council in Georgia

**Nov. 23:** 8th Anniversary of the Rose Revolution

**Dec.:** Venice Commission recommendations on Georgian electoral code

**May 15-22:** NATO summit in Chicago

**Oct.:** Georgian Parliamentary elections

## TOP STORIES

**As WTO Deal Nears, President Saakashvili Hails Agreement as “Diplomatic Victory”**

With Russia on the verge of WTO membership, President Saakashvili today underscored Georgia’s “diplomatic victory” in ensuring the sanctity of the country’s borders. “What we have achieved today is a very important acknowledgment of what Georgia’s customs borders are,” he said. “It is a very important principle that even an occupier recognizes international monitoring. Our position was crystal-clear—either this, or Russia will not become a WTO member.”

Last week, Georgia agreed to the final Swiss proposal on the monitoring of the Georgia-Russia border; since then, all eyes have been on Russia’s response. Yesterday, Moscow’s lead negotiator, Maxim Medvedkov, announced: “We are happy that Georgia supported the draft and that the agreement has finally been reached.” Nonetheless, Tbilisi and analysts remained cautious about the ultimate outcome. “It has to be the same deal; there is only one paper,” said Deputy Foreign Minister Kapanadze of Russia’s unconfirmed agreement to the Swiss proposal. “I will understand it when the signature has been sealed. Until then, I cannot speculate.” Said Dmitry Trenin, senior associate at the Carnegie Moscow Center: “There have been so many disappointments in the last seven years [on the accession bid] that you can only really say Russia has joined when it signs on the dotted line in December.”

The Swiss-mediated deal will see international monitoring of cross-border trade through Georgia’s Russian-occupied regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, despite Moscow’s initial rejection of external oversight. The trade monitoring proposal would station observers in three places: at the main crossing from Russia into Abkhazia; at the Roki Tunnel, which cuts through the Caucasian Ridge into South Ossetia; and at a mountainous crossing into central Georgia. Although Georgia initially sought observers representing governments or public entities like the European Union, its negotiators last week said they would accept private contractors hired by public entities. After Georgia signed on to the plan, Russia asked that Switzerland oversee the contractors, Mr. Kapanadze said.

[AFP: Georgia claims victory in Russia WTO membership deal](#)  
[FINANCIAL TIMES: Hopes rise of Russian agreement to join WTO](#)

**NATO Praises Georgian Reforms Ahead of High-Level Alliance Meeting in Tbilisi**

NATO’s senior decision-making body, the North Atlantic Council, will recognize Georgia’s reform achievements next week during its visit to Tbilisi, as relations between the Alliance and Tbilisi intensify. “The visit by the North Atlantic Council, led by the General Secretary, will be first and foremost a visible sign of commitment that NATO has to our partnership with Georgia,” said NATO’s Special Representative for the Caucasus James Appathurai last week at a joint news conference with Georgia’s Vice PM Baramidze. “I am quite sure that President Saakashvili and the leadership of the country will hear from the NAC that they are very positive on the reform progress that Georgia has achieved over the past year,” he said, highlighting the country’s judiciary and electoral reforms.

Appathurai also applauded Georgia’s commitment to its Annual National Program, NATO’s mechanism for outlining reform targets, saying that continued progress would create a “positive environment” for advancing NATO-Georgia relations. NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen and senior diplomats from NATO member states will meet with President Saakashvili and cabinet members during their two-day trip.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: NATO Envoy speaks of Georgia ties](#)

**Venice Commission Completes Meetings over Electoral Code in Georgia**

The Council of Europe’s Venice Commission visited Tbilisi last week to review Georgia’s progress on its electoral code reforms. Four delegates from the CoE’s advisory body on legal affairs met with representatives of the ruling and opposition parties, civil society, and the diplomatic community. Asked by Parliament to provide legal advice, the Commission intends to finalize its position on the reforms at its next plenary session in December. Ruling party lawmakers said they would vote to approve the draft code only after the Venice Commission delivers its recommendations.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Venice Commission Delegation Visits Georgia over Electoral Code](#)

**Youth See Hope in Georgia, Avoid Emigration, Think Tanks Survey Reveals**

A new study finds that relatively few young Georgians would like to emigrate, encouraged by the country’s democratic progress. According to a recently published survey by the Caucasus Research Resources Center, only 9 percent of Georgian between the ages of 18-35 are interested in permanent migration—the lowest in the South Caucasus. The rate among Azerbaijanis is twice as high, and, among Armenian youth, more than four times higher. The same trend holds across all three age groups surveyed: youth, the middle-aged, and elderly populations. Only 7 percent of all Georgians surveyed are interested in permanently emigrating, while 17 percent and 29 percent of Azerbaijanis and Armenians, respectively, show interest in going abroad for good.

[CAUCASUS RESEARCH RESOURCES CENTER: Fancy Living Abroad? 2010 Survey](#)

**Annual Inflation Cut in Half, Slowing to 2.3% in October**

Inflation rose 2.3% in October from a year earlier, slowing from the 4.6% year-on-year rise in September, the Georgian state statistics agency said on Thursday. Month-to-month, Georgia actually experienced deflation, with the consumer price index falling 0.2% in October. The inflation rate has been on the decline since peaking at 14.3% in May. Transport and fuel prices maintained double-digit increases, however, while food prices also remained high. The National Bank of Georgia reduced its key policy rate by 25 basis points to 7.25% late last month, saying that the annual inflation rate was below the target level and was expected to decrease further.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Annual Inflation Slows to 2.3% in October](#)

**Georgian Byzantine Manuscripts Inducted Into UNESCO’s World Heritage Register**

UNESCO last week recognized old-world Georgian Byzantine manuscripts as part of its “Memory of the World” program, inducting the historical documents into the World Heritage Register. “The collection is of enormous importance as it is widely acknowledged that the Georgian manuscript heritage contains unique material for Byzantine cultural development,” said UNESCO. The collection, which consists of 500 manuscripts and unique translations dating to between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, was deemed uniquely significant. “The works have preserved the samples lost in Greek and other languages while preserving important references to Byzantine authors that replenish the life and work of those writers and unknown writers of the Byzantine literary history,” UNESCO said. “This collection is unique and is deemed to transcend the boundaries of time and culture.” The Georgian documents are the latest additions to the Register’s collection of 245 manuscripts from around the world.

[UNESCO: Georgian Byzantine Manuscripts](#)

[XINHUA: Georgia Manuscripts Recognized by UNESCO](#)

## INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

**NEW YORK TIMES:** Georgians suggest WTO deal for Russia near Georgian deputy FM Kapanadze called the Swiss proposal “the final, final, final compromise.” The monitoring mechanism would consist of an electronic data exchange system as well as human observers and would be in place at three points along the border. “We hope the Russian side is going to agree to it. I really, really hope it’s going to work for them,” Kapanadze said. “This is an agreement that has everything they’ve asked.”

[www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)

**FOREIGN POLICY:** Georgia to Russia on WTO—Take it or leave it

The Georgian government accepted a Swiss proposal last week that would pave the way for Georgia to sign off on Russia’s membership in the WTO. “All the major principles are there; it’s up to the Russians to say yes,” said Georgia’s National Security Advisor Giga Bokeria. “They haven’t said yes, they haven’t said no.”

[thecable.foreignpolicy.com](http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com)

**AFP:** Georgia agrees “final proposal” in Russia WTO talks

Georgia said it has accepted a “final proposal” aimed at overcoming one of the last barriers to Russia’s WTO membership. The deal would see a private company contracted by a third international party physically and electronically monitoring goods entering and leaving the occupied regions, according to Georgian officials.

[www.france24.com](http://www.france24.com)

**NEWSWEEK:** Russia’s next move on WTO

With little fanfare, Georgia last week formally said it had accepted a Swiss-brokered compromise on giving international monitors access to trade points in the Abkhazia and S. Ossetia provinces that border Russia. “This is a good test of Russia’s objective here,” said Atlantic Council vice president and Damon Wilson. “Is their objective to join the WTO or is their objective to label Georgia as a troublemaker.” He added: “What you have on the table from the Swiss is a very reasonable offer, and it represents real Georgian concessions.”

[blogs.thedailybeast.com](http://blogs.thedailybeast.com)

**BLOOMBERG:** Boehner says Russia’s WTO approval depends on Georgia border

Congress shouldn’t consider approving Russia’s admission to the WTO until it respects the “territorial integrity” of neighboring Georgia, where Russian troops have occupied border lands since a 2008 war, House Speaker John Boehner said. “The administration should resolve this stalemate in a manner that respects the territorial integrity of Georgia,” he said. “Then—and only then—will movement on the WTO question be worth considering.”

[www.businessweek.com](http://www.businessweek.com)

**NEWSWEEK/DAILY BEAST:** Obama’s Russia reset a “disaster”

Russian opposition leader Garry Kasparov said Russia should not be allowed to enter the WTO until it negotiates a border arrangement with Georgia. “Russia has a big outstanding problem with Georgia. Unless some compromise is reached with Georgia, I do not think Russia should be allowed in. Giving Putin something in exchange for nothing is the wrong way to negotiate.” He also was critical of Western policy towards Russia. “It’s a disaster. “From day one they bet on Medvedev as a counterweight to Putin. The whole idea of reset was founded on the false assumption Medvedev is an independent politician. He is not.”

[www.thedailybeast.com](http://www.thedailybeast.com)

**L’EXPRESS:** Nicolas Sarkozy in Georgia—the lyrical illusion

Sarkozy returned to Tbilisi earlier this month, the setting for his largely overestimated feat of diplomacy after Russia’s 2008 invasion of Georgia. The ceasefire document has no precise maps, no schedules, no planned penalties in case of violation. Three years later, Moscow militarily occupies Abkhazia and S. Ossetia, Georgian territories that live under the authority of the Kremlin’s proxy regimes.

[www.lexpress.fr](http://www.lexpress.fr)



**LOS ANGELES TIMES:** Nino Machaidze’s star turn

Nino Machaidze, the 28-year-old soprano from Tbilisi, has only been singing professionally for four years. But her recent grab of the leading role in the L.A. Opera’s “Romeo and Juliet” will likely launch her to stardom. The soprano was singing for only her second time at Milan’s La Scala three years ago when she was noticed by Salzburg Festival head Jürgen Flimm and picked as the new Juliet. LA Opera general director Plácido Domingo was aware early on of her ascent. Domingo says her “triumph as Juliet in Salzburg made me certain that our audience would embrace such a talented artist. I was eager to find a way to present her for her American debut.” Says Machaidze: “You know, our job is so beautiful. I think if you take a job like this, and don’t have attitude like, ‘OK, let’s do it,’ you get crazy. So definitely this is my personality, I’m happy that—thank God—I’m like this.”

<http://articles.latimes.com>

**EDM:** Ivanishvili—equidistance between West and Russia

Ivanishvili’s recent foreign policy statements imply Georgian equidistance between the West and Russia, including Moscow’s veto to ensure that Georgian policies are “acceptable for Russia.” By that definition, NATO aspirations and energy transit to Europe via Georgia, for example, would clearly not be acceptable for Russia. Meanwhile, several Tbilisi politicians with past pro-Western reputations, residual Western contacts, and ratings in the low single digits, are currently negotiating with Ivanishvili, who has announced his bid to run for president next year.

[www.jamestown.org](http://www.jamestown.org)

**EUROPOLITICS:** EP committee adopts recommendations on Tbilisi

The European Parliament’s foreign affairs committee has approved a resolution that recognizes the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as occupied territories, and that calls on Russia to unconditionally fulfill all provisions of the ceasefire agreement. The committee also urged that the EU launch negotiations as soon as possible on a deep and comprehensive free trade agreement with Georgia. The committee underscored the tremendous reform efforts made over the past few years in Georgia, especially on media transparency and political pluralism.

[www.europolitics.info](http://www.europolitics.info)

**CANADIAN PRESS:** Did Canada punish Russia for 2008 Georgia invasion by moving satellite?

Canada attempted to sanction Russia for its 2008 invasion of Georgia by switching to India for the launch of Sapphire, the country’s first military satellite. A US diplomatic cable was written under the headline: “Canada considering space launch alternatives due to Russia’s invasion of Georgia.” Says a top military expert: “This was an attempt to signal displeasure over Russian actions and, given the economic situation, this is money for the Russian space industry.”

[www.winnipegfreepress.com](http://www.winnipegfreepress.com)

**GLOBE & MAIL:** Our big fat Georgian family

To travel with a Georgian is to travel under their protection, and by extension, the protection of the entire country. We have now travelled in the Georgian wilderness for 40 days with Sandro. Along the way he has collected botanical specimens from the high peaks, comforted our children in times of tears, and recited Georgian poems around the campfire.

[www.allvoices.com](http://www.allvoices.com)