

Delegation for relations with the South Caucasus  
The Chair

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Mr Nika Gvaramia  
Director of Mtavari Arkhi

Dear Mr Gvaramia,

Thank you for your letter of 6 June 2022 to the President of the European Parliament, in which you called on the leaders of EU institutions to grant EU candidate status to Georgia notwithstanding the political difficulties that are affecting your country. I was asked by President Metsola to reply in my capacity as Chair of the European Parliament's Delegation for relations with the South Caucasus and Co-Chair of the EU-Georgia Parliamentary Association Committee.

First of all, I would like to underline, on a personal note, that I am all the more appreciative of your initiative as I know the distressing situation in which you find yourself now.

Please let me reassure you that an overwhelming majority of our Members share your view that Georgia belongs in our European family.

However, while fully supporting the Georgian people's European ambitions, candidate status is a complex, merit-based process that cannot be expedited as certain eligibility criteria must be met, notably when it comes to the rule of law and independence of the judiciary. Any decision to grant candidate status, let alone to open accession negotiations, rests on the unanimity of the EU Member States, taking into account the opinions rendered by the European Commission. For its part, the European Parliament today adopted a Joint Motion for Resolution by overwhelming majority, which calls on Heads of State and Government to grant EU candidate status to Georgia once its government has delivered on the indicated priorities in the Commission's opinion.

On this latter aspect, I have taken note of the verdict handed down by the Tbilisi City Court in your case on 16 May. While it does not fall within my remit, as Chair of our Delegation, to take an official position on the merits of individual legal cases, I have also heard the questions raised by the Public Defender of Georgia and various civil society organisations on the substance of this particular case and on the way it was handled, and I have conveyed my own reservations during subsequent meetings including with the Foreign Minister and the Ambassador of Georgia / Head of the Mission of Georgia to the European Union. More generally, this verdict came against the backdrop of repeated calls by Georgia's international partners, including the EU, to reform the judiciary and to ensure media freedom. In this respect, I would like to draw your attention to the resolution on "Violations of media freedom and the safety of journalists in Georgia" adopted by the Members of the European Parliament on 9 June.

Concerning the fate of the third President of Georgia, Mr Mikheil Saakashvili, whom you also mentioned in your letter, I also firmly believe that his fundamental rights as

a prisoner, including the right to a fair trial and appropriate medical treatment, must be upheld at all times. Humanitarian issues are our overriding concern and must be given priority.

You can rest assured that the European Parliament's competent bodies (first and foremost, the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Delegation for relations with the South Caucasus) are following the situation in your country very closely.

I would like to thank you again for reaching out to the European Parliament on these very important matters.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marina Kaljurand', written in a cursive style.

Marina Kaljurand