



Minutes of the Session of Interagency Human Rights Council

12 June 2020 Tbilisi¹

Topic of the Session: Human Rights During the Pandemics

Chairperson of the session: Giorgi Gakharia – Prime Minister of Georgia

Co-Chairperson of the session: Natia Mezvrishvili - Head of the Administration of the Government of Georgia

Co-Chairperson of the Session: Lela Akiashvili - Adviser to the Prime Minister of Georgia on Human Rights and Gender Equality

Secretary of the session: Ana Buchukuri - Head of Human Rights Secretariat of the Government Administration of Georgia

Annexes:

Annex №1 – Agenda of the Session

Annex №2 – List of Participants

¹ The meeting was held via Zoom platform.

The Prime Minister of Georgia, Chairperson of the Council Giorgi Gakharia opened the first session of the Human Rights Council of 2020 with an introductory speech and thanked the members of the Council and the invited guests for participating in the session. The Chairperson expressed special gratitude to the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Dunja Mijatovic, EU Ambassador to Georgia Carl Hartzell, Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Program Louisa Vinton and Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Vladimir Scholnikov, and highlighted not just the importance of their participation in the session, but also their contribution to consistent cooperation with international partners for the protection of human rights in Georgia.

The Prime Minister of Georgia talked in detail about the global need for the protection of human rights under the pandemics, and noted that Georgia's state approach at all stages of the fight against the pandemics is based primarily on the protection of human health and life; and on the other hand on the ability for economic recovery as soon as possible, which in turn is focused on protection of human rights. According to the Prime Minister, the reports developed by the government of Georgia provide full cause and effect analyses of the steps made by the government of Georgia, from the onset of the epidemics to the end of the state of emergency. At the end of his speech, the Prime Minister of Georgia expressed hope that the format of the Interagency Council for Human Rights will strengthen coordination, where, on the one hand, effective monitoring will be carried out to maintain the standard of human rights protection and, on the other hand, with representative involvement, effective measures will be planned and implemented to ensure the protection of human rights.

After the welcoming speech of the Prime Minister of Georgia, the floor was passed to the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Dunja Mijatovic, who thanked the Prime Minister of Georgia and the Government Administration of Georgia for organizing the meeting and noted that in order to ensure human rights, coordinated and effective action is especially important to take into account all relevant legal and practical aspects. According to the speaker, the pandemics, which engulfed the world unprecedentedly, created challenges, but also provided opportunities to better protect human rights in times of crisis or without it. In her speech, the speaker focused on the effectiveness of the steps taken by Georgia to protect human rights and, at the same time, focused on the citizens' high self-awareness and obedience to the law.

Afterwards, EU Ambassador to Georgia Carl Hartzell reviewed the measures taken by Georgia in the fight against COVID 19 and assessed them as a successful step. According to him, the Interagency Council for Human Rights, which unites the state agencies, the non-governmental and international sectors, is an effective platform for the country to continue comprehensive care for human rights

and eliminate existing challenges. According to the speaker, Georgia was effective in protection of human rights, especially in the regard to vulnerable groups, not just by implementing particular measures, but through active thematic dialogue with vulnerable community. The EU Ambassador to Georgia spoke about the importance of developing the new National Human Rights Strategy and the readiness of EU to engage in this process. At the end of his speech, he noted that the European Union will remain a loyal partner of Georgia in the process of protection of human rights.

After the mentioned, Lela Akiashvili, Advisor to the Prime Minister on Human Rights and Gender Equality, broadly reviewed the report on the protection of human rights during the crisis caused by COVID-19. Within the frameworks of the presentation, the Prime Minister's Adviser discussed in details the important issues related to the state policy on human rights protection, such as cooperation with local and international organizations, combatting violence against women and domestic violence, standards for the protection of child's rights, improvement of the rights of persons with disabilities, care for the rights of the elderly, protection of minority rights, protection of human rights in the penitentiary institutions, protection of the rights of people living in the occupied territories, care for the rights of Georgian citizens outside Georgia, promoting access to information, issues of segregated information collection, personal data protection, and the proportionality of human rights restrictions during the state of emergencies.

After Lela Akiashvili's presentation, **the Prime Minister of Georgia talked about the importance of developing new Human Rights Strategy** and the need for representative involvement in the development process. According to him, the development of the National Human Rights Strategy is one of the most important priorities of the Government Administration of Georgia. The Prime Minister of Georgia extended gratitude to each party, international and local experts and expressed hope for effective cooperation.

Natia Mezvrishvili, Head of the Government Administration of Georgia, reviewed the decisions made by the Government of Georgia during the pandemics in the field of human rights protection. She thanked the international partners for their expertise and highlighted the role of each state agency in coordinated cooperation in prevention of violation of human rights and their further recovery. At the end of the speech, the speaker noted that the current period should be used as much as possible to identify the problem and plan future steps.

The Public Defender of Georgia, Nino Lomjaria, thanked the audience for organizing the session. According to her, during the pandemics there was active, effective and close cooperation with the Government of Georgia and the Human Rights Secretariat, as well as with local self-government bodies, international and non-governmental organizations. The Public Defender of Georgia

reviewed in details the activities carried out by the Office of the Public Defender of Georgia in regard to human rights in the context of the pandemics.

After the speech of the Public Defender of Georgia, Natia Mezvrishvili, Head of the Government Administration of Georgia, announced a break due to the technical reasons and announced the resumption of the Council meeting on June 16, 2020, at 13:00, in the same order.

Giorgi Gakharia, Chairperson of the Session

Ana Buchukuri, Secretary of the Session



Minutes of the Session of Interagency Human Rights Council

16 June 2020 Tbilisi²

Topic of the Session: Human Rights During the Pandemics

Chairperson of the session: Lela Akiashvili - Adviser to the Prime Minister of Georgia on Human Rights and Gender Equality

Co-Chairperson of the session: Natia Mezvrishvili - Head of the Government Administration of Georgia

Secretary of the session: Ana Buchukuri - Head of the Human Rights Secretariat of the Government Administration of Georgia

² The meeting was held via Zoom platform.

Lela Akiashvili, Adviser to the Prime Minister of Georgia on Human Rights and Gender Equality, briefly reviewed the issues discussed at the first part of the Council meeting (June 12, 2020) and gave the floor to the next speaker on the agenda.

The floor was given to Louisa Vinton, Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Georgia. She expressed support for the policy of Georgian Government, which pays special attention to human rights during the pandemics. The head of the United Nations Development Program noted that all restrictions imposed by the state were proportionate interference in human rights. According to her, in conditions of the resources available, Georgia managed to combat pandemics with maximally proportional restrictions. At the end of the speech, she noted that in the process of combating the pandemics, the Interagency Council for Human Rights became a national monitoring mechanism with high involvement of experts and civil society.

The Representative of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Vladimir Shkolnikov thanked the Prime Minister of Georgia for his active involvement in the session of the Interagency Council for Human Rights. According to him, the pandemics created a number of challenges in the field of human rights, especially in relation to the conditions of ethnic, religious and sexual minorities, including in socio-economic prospective. The speaker expressed his gratitude for the fact that the guidelines developed by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights were shared by the Government of Georgia.

After the mentioned the floor was given to **Ana Buchukuri, Head of the Human Rights Secretariat of the Government Administration of Georgia**, who overviewed the activities related to the National Human Rights Strategy, implemented works and future plans. The speaker explained that as of today, thanks to the joint work of the Human Rights Secretariat, national and international experts, as well as the information provided by the state agencies and non-governmental organizations, the primary document of the strategic priorities and goals of the 2021-2030 Strategy for Human Rights has already been identified.

The Head of the Human Rights Secretariat reviewed in details each stage of the development and approval of the National Human Rights Strategy and paid special attention to the involvement of state agencies and international and local organizations.

In addition, the speaker reviewed the content of the reform of the Interagency Council for Human Rights, implemented with the support of partner international organizations and in close cooperation with the Public Defender's Office. The speaker underlined that the reform doubled the number of the non-governmental organizations within the Council.

According to Ana Buchukuri, in purpose of active cooperation and coordination with the non-governmental sector, within the Council an additional platform was set up - the Advisory Group, member of which can become any non-governmental organization, and where more than 70 non-governmental organizations are currently united.

The floor was given to an international expert, Maggie Nicholson. According to her, it is difficult to plan the human rights policy in prospective of ten years, however she explained that the process of developing the national human rights strategy is going quickly and efficiently, providing wide range of engagement and open areas for discussions. At the end of the speech, the expert expressed hope that the efforts and work of the Interagency Council for Human Rights will have positive impact on the development of the National Human Rights Strategy.

After the speech of the international expert the discussion was started, where the representatives of non-governmental, international organizations and state agencies talked about the issues related to the protection of human rights and the pandemics. Within the frameworks of the discussion, special attention was paid to the following issues: condition of the rights of IDPs during and after the pandemics, the content of the government's anti-crisis plan, access to education and opportunity for physical appearance at the exams for Georgian citizens living in the occupied territories, access to information and reliability of information, socio-economic support for citizens, the importance of coordinated cooperation between civil society and the state, juvenile justice, strategic priorities and goals of the National Human Rights Strategy, procedures for provision of social benefits, the social rehabilitation system, the child welfare system, institutional protection mechanisms within the state, cooperation with local authorities.

After the discussions, the Head of the Government Administration of Georgia – Natia Mezvrishvili, Adviser to the Prime Minister of Georgia on Human Rights and Gender Equality- Lela Akiashvili, and the Head of the Human Rights Secretariat of the Government Administration of Georgia - Ana Buchukuri summarized the session, extended gratitude to the guests for their active participation and expressed hope for future effective cooperation.

Lela Akiashvili, Chairperson of the Session

Ana Buchukuri, Secretary of the Session



HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION DURING THE PANDEMIC

THE INTER-AGENCY HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL'S MEETING

AGENDA

JUNE 12, 13:30

13:30 - 13:50

WELCOME REMARKS

GIORGI GAKHARIA, THE PRIME MINISTER OF GEORGIA

HUMAN RIGHTS DURING THE PANDEMIC

DUNJA MIJATOVIĆ, COUNCIL OF EUROPE COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
CARL HARTZELL, AMBASSADOR OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO GEORGIA

13:50 - 14:05

MEASURES TAKEN TO PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS IN GEORGIA DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS

LELA AKIASHVILI, PRIME MINISTER'S ADVISER ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY ISSUES

14:05 - 14:40

PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS DISCUSSION

14:40 - 14:50

NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STRATEGY

LOUISA VINTON, UNDP RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE IN GEORGIA
VLADIMIR SHKOLNIKOV, THE OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, HEAD OF AGENCY

14:50 - 15:00

NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STRATEGY, PLANNED AND ALREADY COMPLETED ACTIVITIES

ANA BUCHUKURI, HEAD OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS SECRETARIAT OF THE GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION

15:00 - 15:20

NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STRATEGY DISCUSSION



Annex №2 – List of Participants

Name, Surname	Agency/Organization
Members of the Intergovernmental Council for Human Rights:	
Giorgi Gakharia	Prime Minister of Georgia
Natia Mezvrishvili	Head of the Government Administration of Georgia
Lela Akiashvili	Adviser of the Prime Minister of Georgia on Human Rights and Gender Equality
Gocha Lortkipanidze	Deputy Minister of Justice of Georgia
Nino Tsatsiashvili	Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of Georgia
Nunu Mitskevich	Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia
Ekaterine Dgebuadze	Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia
Tamar Gabunia	Deputy Minister of IDPs from the Occupied Territories of Georgia, Labor, Health and Social Affairs
Lia Gigauri	Deputy State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality
Mzia Giorgobiani	Deputy Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia
Khatia Tsilosani	Deputy Minister of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia
Khatuna Totladze	Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia
Rati Bregadze	Deputy Minister of Defense of Georgia
Ana Buchukuri	Head of the Human Rights Secretariat (Division) of the Government Administration of Georgia
Zaza Vashakhmadze	Chairperson of the LEPL - the State Agency for Religious Issues
Revaz Charkviani	Head of the LEPL - the Youth Agency
Gogita Todradze	Executive Director of the LEPL - National Statistics Office of Georgia

Institutions / organizations participating in the work of the Council with the right of deliberative vote and invited guests	
Ketevan Sarajishvili	Ministry of Justice of Georgia
Nato Matcharashvili	Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia
Mikheil Kekenadze	Ministry of foreign affairs of Georgia
Magda Mamukashvili	Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia
Tamar Morbedadze	Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia
Natia Merebashvili	General Prosecutor's Office of Georgia
Aleksandre Tsuladze	Supreme Court of Georgia
Ana Shalamberidze	Supreme Court of Georgia
Ana Iluridze	Office of the Public Defender of Georgia
Irakli Ksovreli	Constitutional Court of Georgia
Nino Lomjaria	Public Defender of Georgia
Giorgi Burjanadze	Deputy Public Defender of Georgia
Ekaterine Skhiladze	Deputy Public Defender of Georgia
Tamar Gvaramadze	First Deputy Public Defender of Georgia
Londa Toloraia	State Inspector's Office
Tinatin Ghogheliani	Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality
Giorgi Sharabidze	Central Election Commission of Georgia
Razhden Kuprashvili	LEPL - Legal Aid Service
Davit Asatiani	Georgian Bar Association
Tamta Devdariani	Georgian Bar Association
Giorgi Chekhani	Georgian Bar Association
Sabine Machl	UN Resident Coordinator (UNRC) in Georgia
Louisa Vinton	Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP)
Benedikt Hosek	Representation of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Georgia
Mariam Tutberidze	Representation of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Georgia
Ketevan Mezvriashvili	Representation of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Georgia
Ana Charnishova	Representation of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Georgia

Gigi Bregadze	Representation of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Georgia
Vladimir Shkolnikov	Representation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Georgia
Besarion Bokhashvili	Representation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Georgia
Erika Kvapilova	UN Women Georgia
Tamar Sabedashvili	UN Women Georgia
Ghassan Khalil	UNICEF Georgia
Kemlin Furley	Representation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Georgia
Lela Bakradze	United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Georgia
Marika Bandzeladze	United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Georgia
Kinan Bahnassi	International Labor Organization (ILO) in Georgia
Karl Hartsel	EU Ambassador to Georgia
Dunja Mijatovic	Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights
Yvonne Gogoll	EU Delegation to Georgia
Cristian Urse	Representation of the Council of Europe in Georgia
Peter Wiebler	USAID Representation in Georgia
Elene – Maia Rusatskaya	NGO - Women's Information Center
Lana Chkharishvili	NGO - Civil Development Agency
Merab Kartvelishvili	NGO - Georgian Young Lawyers Association
Nino Nozadze	NGO - Georgian Young Lawyers Association
Tamar Khukhia	NGO - Georgian Young Lawyers Association
Vladimer Mkervalishvili	NGO "Rights Georgia"
Eka Gigauri	NGO - Transparency International - Georgia;
Giorgi Chitidze	Open Society Georgia Foundation
Giorgi Kldiashvili	NGO - Institute for the Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI)
Ketevan Kukava	NGO - Institute for the Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI)
Levan Avalishvili	NGO - Institute for the Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI)
TamTa Mikeladze	NGO - Human Rights Training and Monitoring Center (EMC)
Ana Abashidze	NGO - Partnership for Human Rights (PHR)
Iulia Kharashvili	NGO IDP Women's Association "Consent"
Vazha Salamanidze	NGO - Civil Society Institute

Nana Janahia	CENN - Caucasus Environmental NGO Network
Maggie Nicholson	International expert in the field of human rights
Giorgi Chkheidze	Promoting Rule of Law in Georgia (USAID/PROLoG) Head of the project
Tamar Kaldani	Expert in Human Rights
Ana Kvernadze	Head of the Policy Planning and Coordination Department of the Government of Georgia
Giorgi Bobghiashvili	Department of Policy Planning and Coordination of the Government of Georgia, Head of the Policy Planning Division
Beka Liluashvili	Adviser to the Prime Minister of Georgia on economic issues
Giorgi Bedoidze	Secretariat for Human Rights of the Administration of the Government of Georgia
Robo Nadiradze	Administration of the Government of Georgia
Guliko Macharashvili	Secretariat for Human Rights of the Administration of the Government of Georgia
Tamar Robakidze	Secretariat for Human Rights of the Administration of the Government of Georgia
Anuki Burduli	Secretariat for Human Rights of the Administration of the Government of Georgia
Meri Kajaia	Secretariat for Human Rights of the Administration of the Government of Georgia
Ketevan Tatuashvili	Secretariat for Human Rights of the Administration of the Government of Georgia