



SUB-COMMITTEE (SC) ON TRADE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (TSD)

JOINT STATEMENT TO THE CIVIL SOCIETY DIALOGUE FORUM

- Representatives of the Government of Georgia and the EU held a videoconference on 6 July 2020 for the fifth meeting of the EU-Georgia Sub-Committee (SC) on Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) under the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA), part of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement.
- Both Parties will be pleased to meet with the representatives of civil society from the EU and Georgia in this Joint Civil Society Dialogue Forum on 10 July 2020 to debrief on the discussions during the TSD SC meeting.
- The Parties exchanged views on the economic and social impact of COVID-19 and on measures adopted to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. The Parties outlined the role of the sustainability agenda in rebuilding a more resilient economy post COVID-19. The EU explained that the European Green Deal would act as EU's roadmap within the global recovery effort, supporting the transition to a climate-neutral and more sustainable economy. EU emphasized the increasing importance of due diligence of supply chains to build an economy that protects workers and environment.
- Georgia indicated that the Georgian Government is formulating a post-COVID-19 recovery plan, which will recognise the opportunities for the development of a more sustainable economic model. The EU stressed that recovery must unequivocally be based on fundamental rights and full respect of the rule of law. Up-holding labour protection and working conditions will therefore be critical for a sustainable and equitable recovery.

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- The Parties agreed that trade policy needs to be an important driver of the recovery phase and to play a role in rebuilding an economy that is a more resilient and sustainable, including promoting responsible business conduct.
 - The Parties discussed the priority areas for implementation identified in the TSD Work Plan 2018-20. More specifically, the TSD SC reviewed the implementation of labour provisions of the TSD Chapter. The EU welcomed the effective enforcement of the extended Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) law, including in the context of COVID 19 crisis. The EU also welcomed the on-going work to strengthen the Labour Inspection Department's capacity, as further steps towards aligning supervision and control in this area with international and EU standards. Georgia presented its plan to increase capacity of the Labour Inspection Department. The EU re-affirmed its readiness to support Georgia through policy dialogue and assistance as a follow up to the seminar organised by the European Commission in Tbilisi in September 2018 on Labour Standards and Inspection.
 - The EU welcomed intentions to further align Georgian national legislation with the ILO Conventions C100 on Equal Remuneration and C111 on Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) and will closely follow the examination by the ILO supervisory bodies. The EU welcomed the significant strengthening of the mechanisms and institutions related to gender equality and anti-discrimination and encouraged further efforts to address the gender pay gap.
 - The EU repeated its call for advancing supervision and enforcement of all core labour standards by establishing a fully-fledged labour inspection system and took note of the submission of draft amendments to the Labour Code to the Parliament of Georgia. In view of ongoing discussions the EU reiterated its trust that Georgia will fulfil its commitments made under the TSD Chapter of the Association Agreement. Georgia reiterated its intention to guarantee that the rights of employees at the workplace are protected and that the labour rights under the Labour Code are enforced. The EU underlined its zero tolerance policy on child labour and called for

completion of legal alignment with ratified ILO conventions and action to eliminate child labour.

- The Parties reviewed the recent developments in the priority areas in the field of environment and climate change. The EU welcomed progress made by Georgia in bringing its legislation in line with the CITES Convention. Namely, Georgia informed that in order to fulfil conditions for “Category 1”, the Parliament adopted amendments to the national legislation. The revised legislation was reviewed by the CITES Secretariat and based on this legislative analysis, Georgian legislation was placed in “Category 1” in September 2019. The EU also acknowledged Georgia’s leadership in ongoing inter-sessional work on indicators for measuring progress towards achievement of the CITES Strategic Vision 2021 to 2030.
- Georgia also stressed that its CITES management authority ensures that non-detriment findings are made and latest scientific information is used to adopt export quotas in order to ensure sustainable trade in snowdrop (*Galanthus woronowii*) specimens. In order to determine the impact of harvests on populations, country-wide field assessments of snowdrop (*Galanthus woronowii*) populations were undertaken in 2018, 2019 and 2020. The third phase of the survey was conducted in 2020 by the implementing institution of the survey and the report of the survey and final recommendations were submitted to the Ministry for further consideration in June.
- The EU welcomed Georgia’s emphasis on the strengthening of capacities to enforce national and international rules on wildlife trade.
- The Parties exchanged information on their respective domestic policies relevant to the TSD Chapter objectives of sustainable forest management and trade in forest products. In this respect, Georgia informed about the adoption of the Forest Code of Georgia by the Parliament on 22 May and the ongoing work on the draft by-laws to bring them in full compliance with the new Code. Moreover, Georgia gave information on the platform of the “Forest and Land Use Information and Decision Support (FLUIDS) System” which has been further improved and officially

presented to the public in 2019. The EU congratulated Georgia for the adoption of the Forest Code.

- Georgia also noted that, currently, the project under the Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN) is being implemented in order to review and update existing natural resource (particularly the Non-Timber Forest Products) use fees to increase revenues from them, incentivize sustainable use and ensure that an appropriate portion of fee revenues are allocated for biodiversity conservation.
- Regarding climate change, the Parties discussed the effective implementation of the UNFCCC. Georgia updated the EU on its Second Biannual Update Report, which it submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2019. With the support of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Global Environmental Fund (GEF), Georgia developed all chapters of its Fourth National Communication to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and currently there is ongoing compilation process.
- Moreover, Georgia informed the EU that it has drafted a more ambitious update of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Georgia intends to submit the document to the UNFCCC by the end of 2020. For the implementation of the NDCs, Georgia developed the draft version of the "Climate Action Plan 2021-2030" (CAP) and mitigation activities have been identified. Furthermore, Georgia initiated the development of Georgia's mid-century Low Emission Development Strategy, within the framework of the project EU4Climate. Georgia also underlined the support of the Green Climate Fund (GCF).
- The Parties agreed review and update the TSD Work Plan 2018-20 by 30 November 2020 and to continue the exchanges on actions to implement the Work Plan.
- The Parties look forward to hearing the views and the opinions of the Joint Civil Society Dialogue Forum on the implementation of the TSD Chapter.

Tbilisi, 6 July 2020
