

**Visit by the UK's Minister of State for Europe and the Americas
the Rt Hon Sir Alan Duncan MP to Georgia and the Fifth Round of
the Georgia-UK Wardrop Strategic Dialogue**

**JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ
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On 8 November 2018, the Minister of State for Europe and the Americas the Rt Hon Sir Alan Duncan MP visited Georgia in the framework of the Fifth Round of the Georgia-UK "Wardrop Strategic Dialogue". Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, HE David Zalkaliani, and Minister of State for Europe and the Americas, the Rt Hon Sir Alan Duncan MP led the Dialogue.

The Dialogue is named after Sir Oliver Wardrop, a British diplomat, the founder and benefactor of Kartvelian studies at Oxford University, widely known for his role as UK's first Chief Commissioner of the Transcaucasus from 1919-1921. Sir Oliver Wardrop has a particular significance this year as Georgia marks the 100th Anniversary of Georgia's Independence and the First Democratic Republic.

In a bilateral meeting, both ministers reaffirmed their commitment to a broad strategic partnership, political dialogue and an intense bilateral agenda with an emphasis on defence, security, economic, commercial, educational, science, cultural and people-to-people dimensions.

During his visit, Sir Alan Duncan paid a tribute to the Heroes fallen for Georgia's unity and laid a wreath at their memorial. He also laid a wreath at the Commonwealth War Grave in Tbilisi, recognising the Commonwealth soldiers who gave their lives in the First World War.

At a working lunch hosted by Minister of Foreign Affairs David Zalkaliani, with the participation of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality Ms. Ketevan Tsikhelashvili, the two sides discussed cooperation between Georgia and the UK, with particular emphasis on the peaceful resolution of the Russia-Georgia conflict, the situation in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, as well as the engagement and reconciliation process between the war-torn communities.

The Ambassador of Georgia to the UK HE Tamar Beruchashvili and the British Ambassador to Georgia HE Justin McKenzie Smith participated in all meetings.

Summary

Both sides stressed the special importance of the Annual Wardrop Strategic Dialogue as a core framework that successfully covers a wide range of issues of bilateral cooperation. They exchanged views on the impressive progress made since the last meeting in London on 23-24 October 2017. The delegations discussed the Georgia-UK comprehensive bilateral agenda, focussing on political, defence and security policy spheres as well as emerging opportunities following the UK's departure from the European Union. The two sides also discussed current developments in both countries; regional political as well as security

challenges; and ways to address these challenges. They reaffirmed their commitment to shared values and common interest and exchanged views on global issues.

The heads of the Georgian and UK delegations stressed their commitment to a strategic partnership and readiness to uphold the rules based international system to address global challenges and foster a fairer, more secure, more sustainable and more prosperous future for both nations.

In the framework of the dialogue, both sides attached great importance to the development of a bilateral legal base for strategic cooperation between the UK and Georgia after the UK's departure from the EU.

Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations was one of the topics of the meeting. UK recognizes the significant progress on reforms Georgia has made in its preparation towards membership. Both sides agreed to continue dialogue in order to facilitate this process. UK reiterated decisions made during the Brussels Summit and reflected in NATO-Georgia Commission Declaration at the level of the Heads of State and Government. UK acknowledged Georgia's contributions to Black Sea security and welcomed further development of practical cooperation in this context.

Throughout the dialogue, there was a focus on the utmost need for the peaceful resolution of the Russia-Georgia conflict, the situation in Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia and different conflict-related issues. In this regard, the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, Ms. Ketevan Tsikhelashvili set out the reconciliation efforts and engagement policy, in particular the new peace initiative "A Step to a Better Future" launched by the Government of Georgia. The British side welcomed these developments.

Both delegations welcomed the parliamentary dimension of the Wardrop Strategic Dialogue characterised by close links between the two legislative bodies and contributing to the overall dynamic of the Georgia-UK bilateral agenda.

The sides stressed the importance of bolstering economic and commercial ties and highlighted the visit of the first UK trade mission to Georgia, in June 2018, headed by the British Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Georgia Mark Pritchard MP and indicative of increasing trade links and business-to-business (B2B) dialogue.

Both sides highlighted the importance of people-to-people contacts and underlined the very special role of the twin cities in bringing communities together. In this regard, they celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Tbilisi-Bristol twinning and welcomed the series of interactions at the level of local authorities, business and culture that took place in both cities.

During the fifth round of the Wardrop Strategic Dialogue, the following memorandums of understanding were signed: a Memorandum of Understanding on Cyber Security between the Government of Georgia and the Government of UK and a Memorandum of Understanding between the Georgian National Parliamentary Library and the British Library.

Ministerial Plenary Session

In the Ministerial Plenary Session, both sides welcomed the excellent political relations and strategic cooperation that exist between Georgia and the United Kingdom and which manifest themselves in both bilateral and multilateral fora.

Minister of Foreign Affairs David Zalkaliani underlined the grave security and human rights situation in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia and extended profound gratitude to the UK for its contribution to the EU Monitoring Mission. He reaffirmed Georgia's unwavering commitment to a peaceful conflict resolution policy. In this regard, he stressed the utmost importance of maintaining the practice of reflecting the human rights situation in these regions in the FCO's Human Rights and Democracy report. The Minister of Foreign Affairs underlined the necessity of a consolidated international approach to achieve the full implementation of the 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement by the Russian Federation, the withdrawal of Russian military forces and the safe and dignified return of IDPs and refugees. He also expressed appreciation for the supportive statements by UK officials on the 10th anniversary of the Russia-Georgia war.

Minister of Foreign Affairs David Zalkaliani welcomed the active discussion of Georgia-related issues in various debates in the UK Parliament as well as the Early Day Motion tabled by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Georgia in July 2018 dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the First Democratic Republic.

The Georgian side expressed full respect towards the democratic choice of the UK population to leave the EU. Both sides demonstrated their commitment to maintaining the strength of the bilateral relationship in line with the comprehensive agenda. The Foreign Minister expressed hope for the lasting engagement of the UK in Georgia and the region following the UK's departure from the European Union.

Sir Alan Duncan highlighted the UK's unwavering support towards Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders, the non-recognition policy and the peaceful conflict resolution efforts pursued by the Government of Georgia. He welcomed the Georgian Government's reconciliation and engagement policy with the people living in Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, including the new peace initiative "A Step to a Better Future" launched in April 2018. He also condemned the reinforced military presence of Russia in two Georgian regions and expressed concern over the threat caused to regional stability by Russia's illegal activities.

Sir Alan Duncan expressed gratitude for the solidarity shown by the Georgian Government in the face of the tragic events in Salisbury, and for their continued support to reinforce the Rules Based International System, especially through the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons OPCW.

The UK side welcomed the democratic transformation of Georgia over recent years and the first round of presidential elections, which were held in a free, fair and transparent manner. Sir Alan Duncan reaffirmed the UK's full commitment to Georgia's European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

Throughout the fifth round, the two sides covered topical issues of bilateral cooperation and agreed to expand partnership ties through links in the trade, innovations, culture, science and education spheres.

Political Pillar

In the Political Pillar discussions, Georgian and British representatives identified key priorities to shape their post-Brexit relationship.

The Georgian side introduced the Government's new reform agenda for 2018-2020. Based on five principles, it will create a strong basis for the long-term democratic, social and economic development of the country. In this context, the importance of sharing best practice was highlighted. The Georgian side expressed appreciation for the assistance provided by the Good Governance Fund in delivering the Government's reform agenda. The UK commended the determination and crucial role of the Georgian Government, as well as Georgian society to further advance democratic consolidation and economic development of the country, including on education, inclusive growth and judicial reform. The UK confirmed its commitment to assist Government of Georgia in its reform agenda.

The Georgian side provided detailed information on Russia's provocative actions with regard to the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia and ongoing violations of the 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement, resulting in a deterioration of the security and human rights situation on the ground. The UK's political support in bilateral and multilateral fora was highlighted along with the FCO human rights report, which identifies severe human rights violations in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia. The Georgian side expressed their commitment to result-oriented engagement in the Geneva International Discussions in order to find durable solutions on the security and humanitarian challenges stemming from the 2008 Russia-Georgia War and the unresolved conflict. The Georgian side expressed particular concern over Russia's destructive steps directed at undermining the important formats of Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms. The Georgian side reaffirmed its commitment to pursue their reconciliation and engagement policy, inter alia through the implementation of the new peace initiative and highlighted the importance of UK's further support in the process of reconciliation and confidence building among the divided societies, welcoming the activities of the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund.

The UK side reaffirmed their strong support for the reconciliation and engagement policy among the divided communities and willingness to contribute to the implementation of Georgian Government's new peace initiative. The UK side confirmed their commitment to remain vocal in the international arena on the need for a peaceful resolution of the Russia-Georgia conflict.

Defence Security and Foreign Policy Pillar

In the Defence, Security and Foreign Policy Pillar discussions, the delegations exchanged views on ongoing trends related to regional and global issues. They welcomed strong bonds between the defence and security agencies of the two countries and stressed the importance of further deepening cooperation on conventional as well as hybrid threats. In this context, the two sides highlighted the lasting cooperation between the ministries of defence and expressed satisfaction over the Defence Cooperation Plan for 2018-2019, signed by respective bodies in March.

Both sides discussed a wide-range of challenges related to external interference and election meddling, propaganda, organised crime, cyber security and crisis management. They agreed to maintain close ties and to continue to develop the relationship. In this regard, they placed emphasis on the exchange of information between the respective agencies. Both delegations recognised terrorism and cyber security as a common threat and stressed the importance of joint efforts in this regard. The officials welcomed the signing of the MoU on Cyber Security between the Government of the UK and the Government of Georgia as a signal of mutual commitment to ongoing cooperation in cyber security. Both sides welcomed the start of negotiations to agree a bilateral general services agreement on the exchange of classified information.

The sides discussed intensified cooperation within different NATO frameworks and Georgia's extensive use of all existing cooperation mechanisms, including the NATO-Georgia Substantial Package, which is supported by the UK. Significance of regular joint military exercises and training was highlighted by both sides, referring to the upcoming NATO and multinational exercises in 2019.

The UK side expressed its gratitude for Georgia's continuing contribution to the international operations, including the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, reaffirmed its strong support to the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package, which is bolstering Georgia's defence reform efforts, its interoperability with NATO, and Georgia's resilience and reiterated its support to Georgia's aspirations to become a member of the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The sides highlighted Georgia's efforts towards enhancement of maritime security and emphasized the role of Joint Maritime Operations Center (JMOC) in this regard. They also welcomed mutual commitment to the Black Sea security and underlined the significance of close cooperation with NATO Allied Maritime Command in Northwood through Georgian Coast Guard Liaison Officer.

The officials discussed institutional capacity building in Georgia and underlined British support for the development of a crisis management system and capacity building. The Georgian side introduced reform of Emergency Management Service of Georgia, the purpose of which is coordination of crisis management activities at all levels, to ensure emergency prevention and civil protection. The Georgian delegation set out the ongoing process to develop a concept for the National Security Council of Georgia and expressed appreciation for UK engagement. In addition, they recalled the successful visit of Minister of State for the Armed Forces the Rt Hon

Mark Lancaster MP; the visit by the British flagship “HMS Duncan”, alongside other NATO warships, in March 2018. Both were a clear demonstration of support to Georgia by NATO allies.

The discussions underlined the importance of the UK staying engaged in the region through continued support for political stability and democratic transformation.

Economic and Commercial Pillar

On the economic dimension, the sides reaffirmed their commitment that trade and sectoral cooperation should remain high on the agenda, with a particular focus on innovation. They exchanged information about current developments in their countries, including ongoing and planned reforms. The sides discussed current bilateral trade and economic relations and possibilities for deepening business ties between the two countries.

In this regard, the sides highlighted the first official UK trade mission to Georgia, in June 2018, headed by the UK’s Trade Envoy to Georgia and Armenia Mark Pritchard MP. The sides also emphasised visits by a Tbilisi City Hall delegation to the UK and the Bristol Guild of Guardians’ visit to Georgia in October 2018. The importance of visits that expand the spheres of cooperation was highlighted.

In this context, the sides underlined the significance of direct flights between the two countries, contributing to the increased number of visitors to Georgia from the UK by 43%.

The sides also discussed the possibilities of cooperation in the areas of infrastructure, retail, transportation and logistics, innovation and agriculture. The sides welcomed the signing of Memoranda of Understanding by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Georgia with the Chambers of Commerce of Gibraltar and Edinburgh, and reiterated their readiness to further promote active cooperation in this format.

Having acknowledged that the Southern Corridor bears critical importance in terms of building resilience in Georgia, the Georgian side outlined the activities of BP in Georgia, which is the second largest investor. The sides underlined the significance of further increasing the volume of UK investments to Georgia and welcomed the active involvement of British companies in the development of the Anaklia deep water port and the Anaklia City projects. The fact that Georgian companies are well presented at the London Stock Exchange was also highlighted.

The UK emphasised that an open and fair business environment is essential to enable further bilateral trade and inclusive economic growth. Georgia has made excellent progress to date in creating this environment and the UK confirmed its support for Georgia’s ongoing economic reforms.

The sides considered the importance of innovation and agreed to hold further discussions on potential cooperation, especially in the field of innovation, technologies and start-ups.

Both sides reiterated their shared objective to strengthen bilateral trade and in this regard, the importance of maintaining a comprehensive free trade regime between the two countries after the UK leaves the EU. Considering Georgia's open liberal trade policy, the Georgian side stressed its readiness to be among the first countries to sign a new comprehensive FTA with the UK.

The sides welcomed the appointment of Derek Pickup as Georgia's first Honorary Consul in Bristol and South West England, and Ms. Sarah Edwina Winson Haynes as the Honorary Consul of Georgia to Gibraltar, underlining that this will further facilitate the bilateral economic and cultural cooperation.

People to People Pillar

Both sides welcomed the strong educational and cultural ties and people-to-people links between the two countries and discussed further potential for deepening the existing intensive cooperation.

Special emphasis was placed on activities undertaken by the British Council in Georgia. The sides underlined the excellent cooperation between Georgia and the British Council in education, arts and society, which focuses on sharing the UK's expertise and innovation. The sides welcomed the English language teaching programmes and English language clubs throughout Georgia and discussed the possibilities for expansion of these networks. The English in VET and Digital Mapping programmes were also discussed by the participants.

The sides welcomed the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the National Parliamentary Library of Georgia and the British Library, which 'provides the overall framework for cooperation to be taken forward, by identifying broad areas of interest for potential future collaboration'.

The sides reviewed educational cooperation and stressed the importance of achieving greater alignment with the education reform priorities in Georgia.

Support for UK and Georgian Universities to exchange faculty and students and share UK experience was discussed, including enhancing education through strategic planning and innovation, management, capacity building, quality assurance and curriculum development. The Georgian side expressed a willingness to learn from Scotland's experience of quality assurance in general educational institutions.

The Georgian side thanked the UK for the growing number of scholarship and fellowship schemes available for Georgian citizens.

The sides gave special consideration to cooperation between LEPL-Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia and research focused institutions in the UK in order to support the mobility of early career researchers to exchange practice and expert database for evaluation of scientific projects. In this regard, the successful functioning of the Georgian Programme at the University of Oxford, funded and supported by the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation, was mentioned.

Both sides underlined the importance of existing cultural links and agreed that all efforts should be made to support and develop this cooperation further. In particular, the sides agreed to share experience in developing virtual and physical clusters and networks in the creative industries sector, enhancing education and capacity building system in the creative industries sector, elaborating state mechanisms for promoting creative entrepreneurs and developing the description of the creative industry sector as well as the methodology and practices of statistical analysis. Both sides agreed to cooperate in the framework of the Creative Spark programme and festival development in the Georgian region of Adjara, led by the British Council in Georgia.

The sides discussed the upgrading of the legal framework between both countries in the spheres of education and culture and the possibilities for drafting the agreement between the relevant agencies.

The sides especially welcomed the ongoing preparations for holding a UK Season in Georgia in 2019, and Georgian Culture Seasons/Culture Days in the UK in 2020 and agreed to exchange best practices in this regard.

The participants welcomed the growing role and positive impact of public diplomacy on Georgia-UK relations. In this context collaboration between the professional networks (such as the British Medical Journal (The BMJ) and Georgian medical institutions, nutrition societies, art and culture centres) were given special consideration and the potential of further expansion discussed.

The Georgian and UK sides highlighted strong partnerships through the twinning associations between Tbilisi and Bristol, Newport and Kutaisi and Newcastle and Akhaltsikhe.

The sides stressed the important role of Marjory Scott Wardrop, scholar and translator in the development of Georgian-British relations and agreed to explore opportunities to celebrate the 150th anniversary of her birth in 2019 in association with UNESCO.

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Following the discussions, Georgia and the UK reaffirmed their intention to strengthen the strategic bilateral partnership and hold the 6th round of the Wardrop Strategic Dialogue in London next year.