



PRIME MINISTER OF GEORGIA

Tbilisi, 18 July 2022

Dear Madame President,

As you may well be aware, a resolution was passed about Georgia by the European Parliament on June 9, 2022. Sadly, it contains multiple groundless entries and factual inaccuracies, in relation with which I stand ready to provide detailed information if need be.

Concern is expressed in the referred Resolution: *“over the destructive role played by the sole oligarch, Bidzina Ivanishvili, in Georgia’s politics and economy, and the level of control he exerts over the government and its decisions, including those on the politically motivated persecution of journalists and political opponents”*. Resolution also seems *“deeply worried by Ivanishvili’s exposed personal and business links to the Kremlin, which determine the position of the current Government of Georgia towards sanctions on Russia”*. In addition, it *“calls on the Council and democratic partners to consider imposing personal sanctions on Ivanishvili for his role in the deterioration of the political process in Georgia”*.

The above entries of the Resolution passed by the European Parliament are not based on any evidence and are aimed to discredit the current system of governance in Georgia. Opponents have never produced any evidence of Bidzina Ivanishvili intervening in politics or justice; besides, he no longer runs businesses in the country and no precedent of any kind exists on alleged personal or business connections with Russia. Thus, everything that was noted in the Resolution about informal governance is totally fictional.

Due to clear reasons, I will not elaborate on the outstanding contribution made by Bidzina Ivanishvili in ending the undemocratic rule in Georgia in 2012 and in ensuring the fundamentally democratic progress of the country from 2012.

I will only focus your attention on absolutely ungrounded accusations about informal governance, which is particularly insulting to me. Allegations on the government run by an individual who left politics by his own will a year and a half ago, rather than by its Prime Minister, is offensive to me personally and to my country.

Besides, entries to the Resolution are used by the radical wing of the opposition to further deepen the polarization in Georgia and it is problematic to my country for that matter as well.

Also, Resolution was directly used by a Swiss bank to put the disbursement of trusted funds back to Bidzina Ivanishvili on hold. Thus, the bank uses the document produced by the European Parliament to infringe the lawful right of the former Prime Minister of Georgia, which is discrediting the country as well.

I am thrilled that the European Commission and Council did not share the absolutely ungrounded calling of the European Parliament and I express my gratitude to you personally for this.

Nevertheless, it is essential that the European Commission expresses its clear position on these ungrounded accusations conveyed in the referred Resolution to fully neutralize the negative impact of the Resolution passed by the European Parliament. Clear position of the European Commission is an essential precondition for staying away from deepening the perception of unfairness among the Georgian people towards European institutions and for keeping the radical wing of the opposition away from deepening the polarization on the grounds of the Resolution passed by the European Parliament.

In addition, assessment document published by the European Commission on Georgia, mentions a term “de-oligarchisation” similar to documents related to Ukraine and Moldova. Our political opponents and their lobbyists within the European Parliament actively refer and note that European Commission made an entry on deoligarchisation in its document because of Bidzina Ivanishvili. As I already noted, Bidzina Ivanishvili has no formal or informal influence on the Georgian politics or media and he may not be deemed oligarch by any legal or political criteria. In contrast with the aforesaid, there are several affluent individuals with criminal track records, who have an active influence on politics and media in favor of the radical wing of the opposition. I cannot urge you to label them as oligarchs, though to make sure that the assessment document of the European Commission is not used to manipulate or discredit the governance system in Georgia, I would urge the Commission to clearly distance itself from the personification of an entry about de-oligarchisation. In this case as well, clarity of the position expressed by the European Commission is essential to leave no space for speculation, to maintain a high degree of trust towards European institutions in Georgian society and to facilitate a decline in the polarization in the country.

As an attachment, please find enclosed my letter published in Georgia several days ago with a detailed clarification of main values and principles that are guiding the governance system in my country. I believe that the referred letter will give you a clear impression on why the radical wing of opposition is fighting against Bidzina Ivanishvili, even after his total exit from politics.

Yours Sincerely,

Irakli Garibashvili

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'I' and 'G' followed by a long horizontal line that loops back under the 'I'.

H.E. Ursula VON DER LEYEN
President of the European Commission

N23015

Open Letter of H.E. Irakli Garibashvili, Prime Minister of Georgia

Posted on the official page in social media on Tuesday, 12th July 2022

I deem obliged towards the general public to respond to the so-called campaign launched by our internal or external political opponents about de-oligarchization, which, on the one hand, is a completely unsubstantiated accusation against Bidzina Ivanishvili and, on the other hand, aims to discredit the current system of governance in Georgia.

As they have no evidence of Bidzina Ivanishvili's involvement in politics, the main "evidence" of the so-called oligarchic rule is reportedly pointing at the fact that I and several advanced members of our political team entered politics exactly under his leadership.

Initially, let me recall that I got employed at the Cartu Group on the grounds of an open contest and that is when I first met Bidzina Ivanishvili. Naturally, I had a close interaction with him as a CEO of the Charity Foundation of Cartu Group. That is when the relationship grew into friendship between our families, which is a profound pride for my entire family. Also, my personal friendship with Bera [Ivanishvili] is my extraordinary pride. I wish to explain to the general public that our families have a periodic communication with each other by taking into account this sheer relationship. For instance, some time ago, my wife sought advice and guidance on a matter related to healthcare from the wife of Bidzina

Ivanishvili. Naturally, if I had such communication with Bidzina Ivanishvili from time to time, there would be nothing reprehensible in this either.

When Bidzina Ivanishvili made a statement about his entry to politics back in 2011, I did not hesitate even for a second. Of course, I had conceptualized the risks related to my decision there and then. Nevertheless, not only for my sheer attitude towards Bidzina Ivanishvili, but in the best interests of the country, I made a decision without any further thinking and got actively involved in the breakthrough fight for democracy.

Apart from me, there were many other representatives of the Cartu Group engaged in this fight, of course. Some of them are still active members of our political team. Threats and pressure were used to not only stop us, but to dismantle the corporate structure of Cartu as well. Nevertheless, our team fought to the very end and survived the pressure by defeating the abusive rule.

There were some, who failed to withstand the pressure and not only fell in the fight, but even left Cartu. Few even emigrated. However, due to the scarcity of due human resources, some of them – e.g. Giorgi Kvirikashvili and Dimitry Kumsishvili were rewarded by Bidzina Ivanishvili for their professionalism and – got cabinet portfolios in the new government.

Nobody can blame anyone for leaving Cartu in 2011-2012 as each of us were subject to the pressure of a tremendous scale and magnitude. General public is well aware, my father-in-law was jailed as soon as I got involved in the political process and a message was thereafter communicated to me that he would be released if and when I would leave Bidzina Ivanishvili's team.

People who were responsible for the security of Bidzina Ivanishvili in 2011-2012 got subject to a particularly heavy pressure from the rule governing the country

without any morality. Vakhtang Gomelauri and Anzor Chubinidze were among such people. They were blamed for the personal security of Bidzina Ivanishvili, while every unethical form was used in the fight against Bidzina Ivanishvili and each of us.

Of course, Bidzina Ivanishvili was the role model of fight and fearless bravery to us - his fellow fighters - at every occasion and personal examples demonstrated by him empowered us most of all.

However, the struggle and courage of each member of the team is worth mentioning separately. Often everything is reported as if Bidzina Ivanishvili won the elections and distributed positions to the members of the team as a mercy. Of course, the merits of Bidzina Ivanishvili exceeded those of any other members within the team, but I would like to remind everyone that Vakhtang Gomelauri, Anzor Chubinidze and others shaped their own success in serving the country, first of all, at the expense of their self-sacrifice and professionalism.

I led to the entry of Vakhtang Gomelauri to the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 2012 and he served as Deputy Minister. Anzor Chubinidze, man of greatest integrity and a professional law-enforcement officer, joined our team in 2012 to serve the nation. When one is choosing people for the governing positions, naturally, one cannot bring in strangers, and first of all, one relies on those who went through the hardest battle together and handled their work with a high degree of professionalism. From this point of view, both Vakhtang Gomelauri and Anzor Chubinidze were outstanding and it is exactly why they maintained high positions within the government for so many years. A few weeks ago, when Vakhtang Gomelauri presented a performance report at the plenary of the parliament, the opposition MPs failed to ask even one proper question about

the activities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which shows that he is managing the system in the best manner.

Same applies to the head of another security agency. Grigol Liluashvili stood on the front line of the struggle in 2011-2012 and currently leads the State Security Service with an excellent level of professionalism.

Naturally, when our internal or external political opponents talk about de-oligarchization, it is particularly humiliating to me. According to constitutional theory and practice, the political leader of the country in a parliamentary republic is the prime minister, and he is accountable towards fellow citizens to perform his duties independently of any excessive influence. When someone claims that the Prime Minister is part of a farce and is actually managed by a person who decided to quit politics in January last year, it insults not only me but the country as well.

Naturally, our political team has a special attitude towards Bidzina Ivanishvili. It stems not only from the fact that Bidzina Ivanishvili is the founder of our political team. In 2011, he sacrificed himself for the country and brought a democratic breakthrough to Georgia and when he left politics, he left us with the right values and rules of the game to govern the state. These values and rules of the game are love of one's country and respect towards the law. However, these values and rules of game are not merely followed as a legacy from the former leader of the team, but rather as vitally important and organic to our entire political team.

The false accusation about the oligarchic rule made by the political opponents against Bidzina Ivanishvili on the one hand and towards the national authorities on the other hand are utterly incompatible with the rules of game left by Bidzina Ivanishvili.

I would like to remind the general public that the most senior government officials at the Ministries of Defense, Foreign Affairs, Justice, Finance and Healthcare have never met or know Bidzina Ivanishvili. He met most of the leaders of the parliamentary team, including the chairman of the parliament and the head of several key committees only on the day of their nomination prior the parliamentary elections. It is total farce and absurd to talk about Bidzina Ivanishvili managing and controlling the government and parliament in the given circumstances.

I would also like to remind you that even after leaving the team, my predecessors - Giorgi Gakharia and Giorgi Kvirikashvili - denied allegations about the interference of Bidzina Ivanishvili in the affairs of the Prime Minister of Georgia.

In such conditions, an objective observer can only have a hypothetical doubt that Bidzina Ivanishvili could have been involved in making specific key decisions of any kind. In current circumstances there can be only two such key decisions: staying away from imposing sanctions against Russia and keeping the country out of war.

I will not talk much about sanctions and war today. Like other members of our political team, I naturally have to be careful about wording. I will say only one thing: if some think that we stayed away from imposing sanctions at the behest of Bidzina Ivanishvili and kept the country out of war at his behest, they are totally wrong. We do not need advice or dictate from anybody on this issue within the team. The reason is simple - we love our homeland and wish no disastrous war for it either. Thus, the team made independent decisions on these matters and complete unanimity has been the guiding principle for us in this.

As I mentioned earlier, the team does not make operational or key decisions at the dictate of the former leader who has retired from politics. Under the given circumstances, authors of the misinformation campaign should make sure to clarify what they mean by oligarchs and de-oligarchization.

Naturally, the factor of Bidzina Ivanishvili plays a significant role in the country. Speaking of his merits, I will not even mention charity. Bidzina Ivanishvili gained the admiration and respect from the team and the society by his self-sacrifice and by establishing the new rules of game and it worries our opponents very much. Our opponents cannot do anything about Bidzina Ivanishvili's past or love and respect resulting from his deeds in the past, which makes them despair. Bidzina Ivanishvili is the direct antipode of the United National Movement (UNM) and its leaders; people see and distinguish things pretty well.

If their problem is a factor of Bidzina Ivanishvili and his existence, as such, then they should admit it. If their problem is the values and rules of game left by Bidzina Ivanishvili, which manifest in the love of homeland and respect towards the law, they should be kind enough to admit this too. It may be a conscious or subconscious hope of our team and general public as well that Bidzina Ivanishvili will once again stand by the side of the country, if need be. If our opponents see a problem in this, that needs to be admitted as well.

Today, Georgia has impressive results in all directions. Against the background of the most challenging situation in the region and the entire continent, along with the most difficult security and economic challenges, as well as the permanently destructive conduct of the radical opposition, Georgia maintains peace, stability and a double-digit economic growth indicator. Of course, all this is thanks to the rules of the game left by Bidzina Ivanishvili to the country. If they

call this oligarchization and want to punish him for this, they should say so directly.

One of the prominent representatives of our society wrote a few days ago that Bidzina Ivanishvili acted as a grandmaster of politics by putting the opposition in a vulnerable position. Indeed, he did not leave the rules of the game or hint on next moves to our opponents. This is a situation where Bidzina Ivanishvili neither makes moves nor gives opponents a chance to make any moves against the country.

Of course, the most accurate analysis of the situation by the society contributes to this conclusion. Citizens of the country gained a lot of experience during the past 30 years. People are now in the position to make correct choices between black and white, rules of game drawn by the United National Movement (UNM) and those left by Bidzina Ivanishvili; choice is thus between who wants war and who wants peace for Georgia, who wants chaos and who wants stability, who wants regress and who wants the progress and development of the country. That is why, our political opponents failed to mislead the people and gain their support, irrespective of their attacks towards the authorities from multiple sides.

The rules of game left by Bidzina Ivanishvili and experiences of the society are two factors that leave no chance of success to our political opponents. In such conditions, I would advise the United National Movement (UNM) and its internal and external partners to adapt to the current situation - peace, stability and double-digit economic growth. They should conceptualize that no matter how much they try, they cannot involve Georgia in the war. They need to understand that when one has no move left on the chessboard, it is always better to change tactics and stop to eventually save prospects for a new game.