

Sharing the common Soviet background two countries always kept striving for their freedom and independence. We can proudly announce that even during the soviet regime our friendly nations were finding mutual points of interaction where friendship and devotion to independence were main generators. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and gaining independence Georgia and Latvia have an excellent bilateral cooperation. Our legislative and executive bodies have started active interaction at the beginning of 90th. We managed to create effective bilateral legislative base which envisages practically all directions of cooperation. We can call our partnership as strategic, strengthening relations by common interests and visions, both on a regional and global scale. Our nations are becoming more and more closer to each other, there are more cultural contacts and it gives as well new impetus to have more active trade relations.

During the last years exchange of official and working visits have been intensified, our officials are expressing more willingness to have more active trade relations. One of the main purposes of the recent official visit of the Latvian President, H.E. Mr. Andris Berzins was the development of economic relations between two countries. More than seventy Latvian businessmen, from more than 50 companies have arrived with the delegation in Georgia. Two business forums were held in Tbilisi and in Batumi. We are glad that mutual endeavours are getting their results and more Georgian and Latvian companies are creating joint ventures.

Since Latvia has joined European Union and NATO our relations have gained new impetus. At the same time Georgia openly declared that the country's main foreign policy priorities are full integration within EU and NATO. It should be mentioned that according to the latest surveys more than 70% of the Georgian population is in favour of countries European and Euroatlantic integration process.

Latvia has always expressed a continuous and constant political support to Georgia in our efforts to move closer to the mentioned targets. I do strongly believe that on our way towards integration to the European and Euro-Atlantic Institutions Latvia will preserve its status as one of the main supporters of Georgia and will share all its experience during our Eurointegration process.

Starting from 1st January 2015 Latvia is chairing Council of the European Union. As one of the main priorities Latvian government announced cooperation with Eastern Neighbours. You are aware that Eastern Partnership initiative has been launched On 3 December 2008, when the European Commission adopted a Communication on the Eastern Partnership. The Eastern Partnership (EaP) is an EU policy aimed to bring Eastern Neighbours (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) closer to the European Union. Riga will host 4th Eastern Partnership Summit in the history. In our opinion this will be the most important summit if considered situation in the region, and this should be the Summit which will blow new power to the cooperation. Practically 5 from eastern neighbours have conflicts on their territories and some parts of these countries are either occupied or annexed by the third party. Georgia has declared its ambitions openly to join EU and Latvia as chair country has prioritised support of such countries. Of course every

movement should be based on individual performance, and individual performance must be approached on individual basis.

The main priority for the current Georgian government is joining the family of European nations. This trajectory is undertaken with supported of all major political parties in the country. Georgia is in a new chapter of relations – ‘irreversible Europeanization. The cornerstone of Georgia's foreign policy is to ensure the national security and territorial integrity of the country and to join EU and NATO.

The main objectives of Georgia includes implementation of the Association Agreement with the European Union (EU), obtaining a Membership Action Plan (MAP) from NATO, securing economic support from the West and instituting a visa-free regime under the Eastern Partnership programme.

Georgia has taken concrete steps domestically to facilitate European integration and NATO membership. The parliamentary elections in 2012 and presidential election in 2013 allowed for a democratic transfer of power under the rule of law.

On March 7, 2013 the Parliament of Georgia unanimously adopted, a Resolution, reiterating Georgia’s commitment to its pro-Western foreign policy course.

On 27 June 2014, the Association Agreement was signed between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part, which aims to deepen political association and economic integration with the EU. Latvia was among the first three European Union Countries which have ratified AA between EU and Georgia.

On 18 July 2014, the Parliament of Georgia unanimously voted in favor of the ratification the EU-Georgia Association Agreement, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA).

On 15 January 2015, the Government of Georgia adopted the 2015 National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Association Agreement between Georgia, from one side and the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, from another and the Association Agenda Between Georgia and the European Union.

Alongside, The government has instituted constitutional reforms such as a system of internal checks and balances, enhancing the role of parliament and the courts. Ensuring border security through Integrated Border Management is one of the main priorities of the cooperation between EU and Georgia within the framework of European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plan, Eastern Partnership Program and more recently Visa Dialogue format and corresponding Visa Liberalization Action Plan.

After signing “Involvement of Georgia in EU civil mission and military operations” at the Eastern Partnership Summit of the EU on November 28, 2013, Georgia joined the EU-led crisis management operations in the Republic of Central Africa (EUFOR RCA) and military training mission in Mali (EUTM MALI) conducted under the aegis of the European Union. Deepening cooperation in EU joint

security and defence policy framework is a significant step forward in terms of EU integration.

As a member of the North Atlantic Partnership Council, Georgia has been cooperating with NATO on civilian and military initiatives. Notably, it has contributed to NATO operations in Afghanistan under the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and is willing to support future NATO security and peace building efforts. Implementation of the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package which was endorsed by Allied Heads of States and Governments at the Wales Summit has an utmost importance. The measures in this Package aim to strengthen Georgia's defence and interoperability capabilities with the Alliance, which will help Georgia advance in its preparations towards membership in the Alliance.

Signature of association agreement with the EU is not the end game for Georgia, nor will be the achievement of Visa liberalization. Our main target which was initially designated by Georgian people is the full membership of the EU and NATO. However, we understand that the path to our final goal is long with numerous challenges. Despite abovementioned, Georgia with support of our European friends, is ready to fulfill all the requirements to achieve the aim. Riga Summit declaration will envisage action plan for future years, as for my country, Georgia will try to do it's homework and step by step get closer to our goal.