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## Georgian, Italian Prime Ministers Meet in Rome



ROME – Georgian Prime Minister, Giorgi Kvirikashvili was welcomed to Rome yesterday by his Italian counterpart, Paolo Gentiloni.

Italian PM thanked Kvirikashvili for his official visit to Italy, saying this would deepen ties between the two countries.

The officials discussed trade-economic and investment potential between the countries, also cooperation in the fields of agriculture, energy and

tourism.

Italian Prime Minister welcomed Georgia's success in achieving visa-free travel to Europe for its citizens, which will come into effect in just 20 days.

Regional developments and the situation in Georgia's occupied territories were also discussed at the meeting.

Paolo Gentiloni confirmed the support of the Italian government for Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Prior meeting his counterpart, Kvirikashvili met Italian Foreign Minister, Angelino Alfano.

The importance of the diplomatic relations between Georgia and Italy, which celebrate their 25th anniversary, and prospects of further cooperation were discussed at the meeting.

The parties discussed some of the key issues pertaining to the partnership between the two nations and emphasized the close friendly bonds between Georgia and Italy.

The Prime Minister of Georgia and the Italian Foreign Minister also discussed Georgia's European and Euro-Atlantic integration and its progress on this path. According to the parties, EU visa waiver for Georgian citizens will further deepen cultural ties and tourism and business relations.

"Italy considers Georgia a member of the European family," President of the Senate Pietro Grasso stated during the meeting with Kvirikashvili.

At the meeting in Rome, the parties discussed the two countries' bilateral relations and prospects of deeper economic cooperation.

Moreover, Kvirikashvili met with NATO Parliamentary Assembly President, Paolo Alli.

The parties discussed Georgia's North-Atlantic integration and the implementation of the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package, also commending Georgia's significant progress in this direction.

During the meeting it was announced that Tbilisi will host the 2017 NATO Parliamentary Assembly Spring Session on May 26-29. The Assembly meets twice a year the spring and autumn.

During his official visit to Italy, Kvirikashvili participated in Italy-Georgia Business Forum held on March 8 in Rome, where more than 250 leading Italian and Georgian companies were represented.

Kvirikashvili introduced Italian businesspersons to some of the features of Georgia's attractive business environment, including low rates, light market regulations, easy physical and normative market access, the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) with the EU, the country's geostrategic location, high-speed train system and highways, and ongoing reforms seeking to promote economic growth and businesses.

The Prime Minister also provided leading Italian business representatives with detailed information on Georgia's investment opportunities and the Government's four-point reform agenda. According to him, Georgia is open for business.

"Investing in Georgia requires little legal hassle and normative adjustment. Georgia's DCFTA with the EU, established in 2014, is of particular importance for us, as it envisions the gradual economic integration of Georgia with the EU's internal market," he said.

Kvirikashvili said that Georgia is a window to a number of markets, including Central Asia and the Far East.

"We provide physical access through modern transport infrastructure and normative access in terms of free trade agreements. We have finalized negotiations and Georgia will be the first country in the region to have a Free Trade Agreement with China. We also have in place FTA agreements with the CIS, Turkey, and GSP regimes with the US, Canada and Japan and plan to launch FTA negotiations with India later this year. Thanks to a liberal trade regime, low taxes, and our strategic location, Georgia has become a new regional frontier for investment opportunities," the PM added.



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He also spoke about some of the largest projects of Georgia and named the future port near Anaklia as an example – the only deep-sea port on the Eastern side of the Black Sea which sits on the shortest route from China to Europe.

During the Italy-Georgia Business Forum, a memorandum of cooperation was signed between the Italian SACE export credit agency and Georgia's Partnership Fund. A similar memorandum was also signed between the Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Italian Chamber of Commerce.

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