

Strong parliamentary relations

By **GIORGI KHELASHVILI**

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GIORGI KHELASHVILI serves as member of Parliament of Georgia, in the Georgian Dream party, and currently holds the position of Deputy Chair of the Foreign Relations Committee. Prior to this, he was Director of Research Centre, Parliament of Georgia from 2019-2020 and Adviser to the Speaker of Parliament of Georgia from 2017-2019. He held the position of Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Georgia in Washington DC from 2013-2017.

Georgia and the United Kingdom have developed close and fruitful relations that benefit both our nations but also rest on common values and a shared understanding of broader international and global issues. Georgia and the UK have stood shoulder-to-shoulder in Afghanistan militarily, and have joined forces politically multiple times over the pressing issues of international significance. This friendship already spans three decades, ever since Georgia became independent in 1991 and the Georgia-UK diplomatic relations were established the following year.

The UK's invaluable support rendered to Georgian statehood manifests itself in a steadfast backing of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity at the most important international gatherings as well as in daily diplomatic interactions throughout the world. This support is well known and highly appreciated not only among the Georgian political class but among the general populace. This gratitude adds to the sympathy that Georgians have historically always felt towards the UK: appreciating British literature, culture, and art, as well as the British people's world-renowned respect for cultural traditions, something that Georgians also cherish.

In the last few years, Georgia made significant strides toward stronger institutions, greater democracy, and a more open economy. A deeper contact with the UK has made these endeavours ever more successful, starting from Britain's contribution to strengthening Georgia's national security, bolstering Georgia's vibrant civil society, and diversifying Georgia's foreign economic

ties, among others. The UK's invaluable and generous help, through various educational programmes and scholarships, in raising a new generation of young Georgian professionals and scholars has certainly contributed to what Georgia has become – an aspiring member of the European and Euro-Atlantic community of nations and the recognised frontrunner in regional democratic and economic transformation.

Today, Georgia stands with the UK, being one of the earlier signatories of the new comprehensive *Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Agreement*, as a follow-up to Brexit developments. Our strong ties in trade, tourism, education, science, and culture lay a solid foundation for the forthcoming decades of solid friendship. Parliamentary relations between our countries build on this strong ground, bringing together not only members and staff of the two Parliaments but also the great democratic experience of British Parliamentarianism. Our two countries are set to benefit from this promising relationship. As a young democracy, Georgia seeks to benefit from the progressive agenda that the UK has to offer, especially in the fields that go beyond traditional regional or international issues, encompassing the agenda of the future: the problems of preserving global environmental health, protecting human rights, and achieving ever greater equality.

Standing firmly on these achievements and intentions, at the thirtieth anniversary of our diplomatic relations, we look forward to developing even closer and more productive relations between Georgian and British Parliaments. **F**

Signing of the UK-Georgia Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with HE Davit Zalkaliani, Minister of Foreign Affairs for Georgia, and Rt Hon. Dominic Raab, then Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom

