

United States-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership

Preamble

The United States of America and Georgia:

1. Affirm the importance of our relationship as friends and strategic partners. We intend to deepen our partnership to the benefit of both nations and expand our cooperation across a broad spectrum of mutual priorities.
2. Emphasize that this cooperation between our two democracies is based on shared values and common interests. These include expanding democracy and economic freedom, protecting security and territorial integrity, strengthening the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the right of dignified, secure and voluntary return of all internally displaced persons and refugees, supporting innovation and technological advances, and bolstering Eurasian energy security.
3. Stress our mutual desire to strengthen our relationship across the economic, energy, diplomatic, scientific, cultural and security fields.

Section I: Principles of Partnership

This Charter is based on core basic principles and beliefs shared by both sides:

1. Support for each other's sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and inviolability of borders constitutes the foundation of our bilateral relations.
2. Our friendship derives from mutual understanding and appreciation for our shared belief that democracy is the chief basis for political legitimacy and, therefore, stability.
3. Cooperation between democracies on defense and security is essential to respond effectively to threats to peace and security;
4. A strong, independent, sovereign and democratic Georgia, capable of responsible self-defense, contributes to the security and prosperity not only of all Georgians, but of a Europe whole, free and at peace.
5. An increasingly democratic Georgia can unleash the full creative potential of its industrious citizens, and thereby catalyze prosperity throughout the region and beyond.
6. The United States encourages efforts by Georgia to deepen its political, economic, security, and social ties with other nations of the Euroatlantic community.
7. The partners declare that their shared goal is the full integration of Georgia into European and transatlantic political, economic, security, and defense institutions as Georgia meets the necessary standards.

Section II: Defense and Security Cooperation

Our two countries share a vital interest in a strong, independent, sovereign, unified, and democratic Georgia. The United States recognizes Georgia's important contributions to Coalition efforts in Iraq as demonstrating Georgia's potential as a net provider of security. Deepening Georgia's integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions is a mutual priority, and we plan to undertake a program of enhanced security cooperation intended to increase Georgian capabilities and to strengthen Georgia's candidacy for NATO membership. In this connection, we note the Alliance's affirmation at its Bucharest Summit in April 2008 that Georgia will become a member of NATO.

1. Working within the framework of the NATO-Georgia Commission, the United States and Georgia intend to pursue a structured plan to increase interoperability and coordination of capabilities between NATO and Georgia, including via enhanced training and equipment for Georgian forces.
2. Recognizing the persistence of threats to global peace and stability, and recalling the Georgian and Russian commitment within the August 12 ceasefire agreement to the non-use of force, the United States and Georgia intend to expand the scope of their ongoing defense and security cooperation programs to defeat these threats and to promote peace and stability. A defense and security cooperation partnership between the United States and Georgia is of benefit to both nations and the region.
3. Acknowledging the growing threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the United States and Georgia pledge to combat proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and dangerous technologies through adherence to international nonproliferation standards, effective enforcement of export controls, and strengthened enforcement of such controls.
4. Building on the existing cooperation among their respective agencies of defense and armed forces, the United States supports the efforts of Georgia to provide for its legitimate security and defense needs, including development of appropriate and NATO-interoperable military forces.

Section III: Economic, Trade and Energy Cooperation

The United States and Georgia intend to expand cooperation to enhance job creation and economic growth, support economic/market reform and liberalization, continue to improve the business climate, and improve market access for goods and services. We recognize that trade is essential to promoting global economic growth, development, freedom, and prosperity. We welcome the emergence of a Southern Corridor of energy infrastructure. The United States endeavors to facilitate the integration of Georgia into the global economy and appropriate international economic organizations.

1. Acknowledging the importance of increased investment to economic growth and development, the United States and Georgia intend to pursue an Enhanced Bilateral Investment Treaty, to expand Georgian access to the General System of Preferences, and to explore the possibility of a Free-Trade Agreement.

2. The United States is committed to assisting the post-war reconstruction and financial stabilization of Georgia. We intend to work together to respond to the needs of the Georgian people, implement policies and programs that reduce poverty in the country, and promote the welfare of all Georgian citizens through investments and sustained improvements in the health and education systems.
3. Recognizing the importance of a well-functioning, market-oriented energy sector, the United States and Georgia intend to explore opportunities for increasing Georgia's energy production, enhance energy efficiency, and increase the physical security of energy transit through Georgia to European markets. We intend to build upon over a decade of cooperation among our two countries and Azerbaijan and Turkey, which resulted in the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Baku-Supsa oil pipelines and the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum natural gas pipelines, to develop a new Southern Corridor to help Georgia and the rest of Europe diversify their supplies of natural gas by securing imports from Azerbaijan and Central Asia.

Section IV: Strengthening Democracy

Recognizing Georgia's significant achievements to date, our two countries commit to work together to strengthen media freedom, parliament, judicial reform, the rule of law, civil society, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and anti-corruption efforts. We rededicate ourselves to our shared values of democracy, tolerance and respect for all communities, and intend to cooperate as follows:

1. The United States and Georgia pledge cooperation to bolster independent media, freedom of expression, and access to objective news and information, including through assistance to journalists and media outlets.
2. The United States and Georgia pledge cooperation to strengthen further the rule of law, including by increasing judicial independence. In this regard, the United States intends to provide assistance in this process, including training of judges, prosecutors, defense lawyers, and police officers. Through enhanced law-enforcement and judicial-branch relationships, we plan to address common transnational criminal threats such as terrorism, organized crime, trafficking in persons and narcotics, money laundering, and cyber crime.
3. The United States and Georgia plan to work together to promote good governance by increasing the transparency and accountability of Georgia's executive branch and legislative processes, and expanding citizen and media access to government deliberation.
4. The United States and Georgia pledge to work together to increase political pluralism in Georgia, including by encouraging the development of political parties, think tanks, and non-governmental organizations, with their participation in developing legislation and enacting reforms to create a more competitive electoral environment.
5. The United States and Georgia plan to work together to strengthen the capacity of Georgian civil society to develop and analyze public policy, advocate on behalf of citizen interests, participate in the legislative process, and provide oversight of public officials.

Section V: Increasing People-to-People and Cultural Exchanges

The United States and Georgia share a desire to increase our people-to people contacts and enhance our cultural, educational and professional exchange programs that promote democracy and democratic values and increase mutual understanding.

1. Recognizing the importance of increased contact between the people of the United States and Georgia, both sides intend to promote further cultural and social exchanges and activities through initiatives such as the Fulbright Program, the Future Leaders Exchange Program (FLEX), Undergraduate Exchange (UGRAD), Legislative Education and Practice (LEAP), the International Visitor Leadership Program, and the English Language Teaching and Learning Program.
2. Stressing the necessity of innovation and dynamism to the future of our two countries, the United States and Georgia intend to promote increased cooperation in higher education, business, and scientific research. The United States plans to facilitate the application process for U.S. visas consistent with U.S. laws and procedures so that qualified individuals in cultural, educational, business, and scientific activities are given the opportunity to participate.
3. In Georgia's post-war environment, the United States and Georgia intend to restore damaged cultural-heritage sites and media outlets, and to foster continued contacts between the residents of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia and the rest of Georgia.

Signed at Washington, D.C. on January 9, 2009.

For the United States of America:

For Georgia: