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**Dear Prime Minister,**

Europe is facing an unprecedented public health crisis and far-reaching measures are being taken all over the continent. In these difficult times, cooperation and solidarity are key. The EU welcomes the prevention measures taken by the Georgian government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We recognise the difficulty of some of these decisions – not least because of the economic impact on the country. We will support Georgia in this unprecedented crisis.

Our aim is to immediately assist Georgia and other partners to alleviate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health systems as well as to offer support in mitigating its socio-economic consequences and impact on people's daily lives.

Our support to Georgia is part of a wider package for the Eastern partners, amounting to a likely total of €140 million. In this context, we will support the Georgian health system through a financial contribution to the World Health Organisation for its work in Georgia. The EU is providing €30 million for the Eastern partners, to, inter alia, purchase equipment needed for fighting the virus and strengthening protection measures for the population. This will ensure that these necessary supplies are jointly purchased and effectively distributed to the health systems of the six countries in the coming weeks.

Support will also be provided for training of medical and laboratory staff and awareness raising measures to the wider population. In this light, I was very pleased to learn that a Georgian producer of medical textiles was already able to produce 40,000 medical gowns within a week after he could purchase 12 additional sewing machines thanks to a microgrant provided by the EU. Furthermore, a new EU Initiative for Health Security will involve preparedness and capacity building of epidemiologists and frontline health staff and advice by specialists from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. We are also ready to assist your Government through bilateral support to effectively respond to and minimise the impact of the coronavirus crisis and to strengthen the health system after the outbreak including through ongoing technical expertise placed in the Ministry Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs.

**H.E. Giorgi Gakharia**

Prime Minister of Georgia  
Tbilisi, Georgia

The EU will support Georgia's economy, notably small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the self-employed and other economic operators by providing liquidity. This will take place via International Financial Institutions (IFIs), with whom we are already working in order to facilitate, simplify and accelerate the uptake of existing credit lines and grants to SMEs in local currency amounting to €200 million. Out of this, between €50 to €60 million should be available for Georgian SMEs and microenterprises for which they can apply via our partner financial intermediaries. In addition, Georgian SMEs can apply to a new support programme of €100 million, which will help them easily access credit in Lari and restart their businesses after the crisis. About €20 million of the total amount could be available for Georgian SMEs and micro enterprises. In addition, the Commission will make available €500 million of guarantees planned under the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD) to facilitate the provision of liquidity in the EU's neighbourhood including through working capital, trade finance, or moratoria on debt service. This is in addition to almost €20 million in grant funding that will be launched in 2020 in Georgia under various projects throughout the country aimed at supporting local business, farmers and individuals in gaining skills, developing their businesses and/or recovering from the crisis. On a micro level, EU projects are currently providing legal advice and limited microgrants to small businesses responding to the pandemic.

We will also support the people who are most affected by the crisis, together with civic partners. The Commission has also made available more than €11.3 million in small grants to civil society organisations. These funds are already responding to immediate needs, through the ongoing regional "Rapid Response Mechanism", such as supporting local schools with distance learning. By the summer, and as part this package the Commission will launch the "Eastern Partnership Solidarity Programme" which will target the most affected parts of the populations through civil society support and notably sub-grants to smaller, local organisations. In addition, I am pleased to announce that CSOs can already apply for €4 million in grants for activities in Georgia in areas including social entrepreneurship, social services and human rights. Furthermore, the EU has ongoing macro financial assistance programmes with partners, including Georgia. A contribution to the state budget could be made available as soon as specific jointly agreed actions have been implemented.

This is a rapidly evolving situation and we will need to adapt accordingly. In Brussels, our team at DG NEAR responsible for Georgia is leading this exercise. I have asked the Head of EU Delegation, Ambassador Hartzell and his team in Tbilisi, to liaise closely with you in taking this forward, while services in Brussels will regularly update your Mission.

I believe that working together we will come through this crisis even stronger.

Yours sincerely,

  
Oliver Várhelyi