

Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, Esteemed Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends of my country,

It is a great honor to be with you today to address so many different nations of the world.

We are a government that believes Georgia inherently deserves to be a peaceful, stable, and developed country. With this in mind, over the last decade, we have ensured that Georgia develops along this trajectory. We have made some tough choices, and were never afraid of the challenge. We never chose an easy path and we always prioritized our nation and our people. As a result, we are reclaiming our nations' pride – the pride and dignity that a country with 3,000 years of history deserves.

We gather here in times of unprecedented global challenges, when interlinking crises of escalating conflicts, climate change, and rising humanitarian needs remain complex. These challenges require bold actions. Georgia has never been afraid of bold actions. The last couple of years have been difficult for our region. While we should be concentrating on global challenges, such as development and problem-solving, the ongoing war in Ukraine has caused an unprecedented level of uncertainty and a humanitarian crisis. I would like to underline once again: Georgia's support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders remains firm and unwavering.

Understanding the firsthand importance of peace, we have led the effort to transform our immediate South Caucasus region from a region of conflicts into a region of opportunities. We welcome the process of peaceful settlement between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and in particular,

the efforts aimed at normalizing relations with neighboring countries. We have been, and are, willing to provide a regional cooperation format that will support collaboration and trust-building between countries, to make sure differences are left in the past, and that we move forward together to capitalize on all the resources and advantages our region has to offer the world.

Georgia's strategic location, serving as a natural bridge between Europe and Asia, makes Georgia the shortest route between East and West. With our sea access and strong relations with China as well as Central Asian countries, Georgia is a key player in the regional and broader Eurasian context. We are a hub not only for the exchange of goods, but also for energy transit and much more. Georgia ensures that seven landlocked countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia are connected with the rest of the world via our port infrastructure, which we are committed to further developing with the soon-to-commence Anaklia Deep Sea Port Construction.

If we look at the political map, Georgia is the single safest and most reliable transit route to ensure the timely and efficient movement of goods and services. Our commitment to maintaining and enhancing our role as a reliable transit corridor ensures we are able to support our strategic partners in Europe with their energy security needs. By diversifying supply routes and investing in robust infrastructure, Georgia can offer additional predictability in East-West connectivity, especially within the framework of the Middle Corridor Initiative.

As we all know, the last couple of years have brought significant challenges. Despite these multiple tests, Georgia has demonstrated remarkable resilience to such external shocks. Our average annual economic growth since 2021 has been 9.7%. Thanks to strong

macroeconomic fundamentals and fiscal discipline, the government debt and fiscal deficit declined to 39.3% and 2.5%, respectively. Additionally, Georgia has maintained one of the lowest regional inflation rates, further showcasing its economic stability.

Despite significant economic improvement and cutting the poverty rate in half over the last 10 years, further reducing poverty and inequality is at the heart of Georgia's socio-economic development agenda. In 2023, the employment rate showed significant improvement, coinciding with an increase in the labor force participation rate. The positive trend continued in the first half of 2024 as well, when the unemployment rate decreased to a record low of 13.7%.

Georgia's effective performance is duly reflected in international rankings from the world's most reputable agencies:

- The "Global Competitiveness Survey" by the World Economic Forum ranks Georgia 20th in the world and 11th in Europe in terms of Corruption Control; while in terms of Rule of Law, Georgia ranks 29th in the world and 14th in Europe;
- The International Budget Partnership's Open Budget Survey ranks Georgia as Number One in terms of Budget Transparency globally;
- "Transparency in the Time of War" by the European Research Centre for Anti-Corruption and State-Building placed Georgia 17th in its 2023 ranking, ahead of 15 EU member states and four G7 states;
- Additionally, Georgia is the 25th freest economy in the world according to Fraser Institute's Economic Freedom of the World report, once again ahead of many leading economies;
- The Heritage Foundation's Index of Economic Freedom ranks Georgia 19th in Europe and 32nd globally, once again ahead of many EU countries;

- According to the OECD FDI Regulatory Restrictiveness Index, Georgia ranked 8th among more than 80 countries as one of the most open economies in the world in terms of attracting investments. That's the reason why Georgia's FDI-to-GDP ratio is one of the highest among peer countries. FDI in 2023 amounted to 1.9 billion USD, representing 6.2% of GDP. In the post-pandemic period until now, Georgia has attracted 6.2 billion USD in FDI, further supplementing Georgia's transformation into a regional multi-functional hub that serves all things business.

Even though we hosted more than seven million tourists last year, showing a strong bounce back in post-COVID recovery, Georgia still maintains one of the lowest crime rates globally. According to Numbeo, Georgia ranks 8th in Europe and 21st globally, thanks to our law enforcement agencies and professionals.

Despite the fact that 20% of our territories are under illegal occupation, we continue to thrive, continue to grow, and continue to make sure that our children live in a better, stronger, and more dignified Georgia. We are diligent and tireless in our quest to make sure Georgia is a country that every citizen is proud of.

I want to use this opportunity to address our people on the other side of occupation line, in the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions. Whatever actions we take are done to help our people so that one day, with our children, we can live together in one happy, united, and developed Georgia. On this side of the occupation line, we will always meet you with an open heart. We have to re-build all the broken bridges in our country.

Dear Colleagues and Friends of my country;

In conclusion, Georgia is at a pivotal point in its modern history, and we as the government of the people are determined to guide our country in the best interests of the nation, to make sure we overcome all our challenges and become stronger and more successful than ever before. We are optimistic that Georgia's desire to become a full-fledged member of the European Union will be achieved by 2030.

As we look ahead to the future with a commitment to shaping a prosperous community together with our allies and partners, our united efforts will persist in supporting peace-building measures and sustainable development. In doing so, we will advance human dignity, not only for the citizens of Georgia today, but also for the wellbeing of all future generations to come.