



The Coalition for an Independent and Transparent Judiciary welcomes timely completion of the process of election of a new Chief Justice

The Coalition for an Independent and Transparent Judiciary welcomes timely completion of the process of election of a new Chief Justice. Despite certain delays, the Parliament has still managed to complete the process according to the existing procedures and elected a new Chief Justice by 88 votes on March 20, 2018. It also needs to be noted that for the first time in history, Georgia will have a female Chief Justice. This is a step forward in increasing the role of women in deciding the issues of high importance.

At the beginning of the process of selection of a candidate for the position of Chief Justice the Coalition published a statement calling for an adequate planning and implementation of the process by different actors. The Coalition recommended that the candidate selection, nomination and approval process had to be carried out according to formalized, transparent, and inclusive procedures. The Coalition believed that the candidate selection criteria had to be clearly defined and also advised President to create an advisory council which would provide recommendations on candidates in the process of selection.

Notwithstanding the fact that such a council was not created, President of Georgia considered majority of the Coalition's recommendations and carried out the process of selection of a Chief Justice in a transparent manner. Despite exclusiveness of the President's right to select and nominate a candidate the process was carried out in a

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way that ensured participation of civil society groups. The meetings between President and representatives of civil society, professional circles, and political parties, contributed to the agreement on specific criteria. At the end, due to the engagement of President, the Parliament, and other actors, the process that bears great significance for the justice system has developed.

We believe that it was important to select a new Chief Justice who is also the Chair of High Council of Justice to ensure uninterrupted work of the court system. The Coalition believes that in the presence of a new Chief Justice the High Council of Justice and the entire judicial system will continue the reform process. We think that this reform shall prioritize the following issues:

- Increasing public trust in the courts by ensuring quality and transparency of the judicial process, and by distancing itself from political pressures;
- Increasing the role and efficiency of the High Council of Justice as a constitutional body by means of the institutional reform of the judiciary;
- Improving the rules of work of the High Council, as well as its transparency and quality of substantiated decisions;
- Defining an optimal number of judges in common courts in a timely manner; filling in the vacant positions to eliminate the problem of overloading in courts, which prevents timely and effective realization of justice;
- Effective implementation of the Supreme Court reform, including an adequate division of functions between the Supreme Court and High Council of Justice;
- Comprehensive reform of the system of disciplinary liability, ensuring its transparency and effectiveness;
- Comprehensive reform of the system of selection and appointment of judges and abolishment of a three year probationary period in this context;
- Improving the rule of case assignment and defining an adequate role of court chairmen;
- Effective application of technologies in the court system;
- Increased involvement of judges, the conference of judges and associations of judges in the reform of the justice system;
- Involvement of the judiciary in the discussion of the issues related to the elimination of miscarriages of justice and development of an effective legal mechanism for this purpose.

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The Coalition is congratulating the new Chief Justice with a position of high status and responsibility and is hoping that the judiciary will continue cooperating with the Coalition as well as other professional groups which work in the justice system.