

CHAIRMANSHIP PROGRAMME



Chairmanship of Georgia
ODED - GUAM
2021



PROGRAMME OF THE GEORGIAN CHAIRMANSHIP

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EFFICIENT GUAM – SOLIDARITY, CONSISTENCY, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

From January 1st, 2021, Georgia took over the Chairmanship of ODED – GUAM for the period of one year. The Chairmanship matches with the unprecedented challenging times, caused by the COVID-19. The ongoing pandemic put a severe strain on countries and nations worldwide. Nevertheless, this period also demonstrated special importance of unity and partnership - the world can only overcome this global disease by acting in the spirit of solidarity and international cooperation. In this regard, GUAM Member States (GUAM MS) will have to work together bilaterally as well as within GUAM, in order to tackle the socio-economic consequences caused by the pandemic.

With the current global challenges in mind, one of the most significant issues during this year appears to be the vaccination process to combating COVID-19. Although, the vaccines are now being distributed, due to the high demand and limited supplies, certain states are still facing trouble in this process, and therefore, stronger solidarity on this matter is of highest importance.

2021 marks the 15th anniversary of establishment of ODED – GUAM as the full-fledged international organization where Georgia, Republic of Azerbaijan, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine cooperate based on the adherence to the principles of solidarity, consistency and continuity. GUAM agenda covers the issues of political interaction; sectoral cooperation; collaboration with GUAM partners in GUAM+ formats; and inter-parliamentary dimension.

Embracing the challenges in 2021, the Georgian Chairmanship will be strongly committed to put every effort into further development of the Organization. Throughout the year Georgia will promote and advance all core issues of GUAM Agenda, including the political, sectoral and inter-parliamentary interaction. Ultimately, Chairmanship aims to foster stronger and mutually beneficial cooperation within GUAM.



Hence, the priorities of the Georgian Chairmanship reads as follows:

- I. Enhancing political consolidation;**
- II. Further intensifying existing cooperation with GUAM Partners & development of new collaborations with possible partners in GUAM+ formats;**
- III. Reinvigorating sectoral cooperation;**
- IV. Increasing interaction within GUAM Parliamentary Assembly & boosting cooperation between GUAM PA and other international inter-parliamentary organizations.**

I. ENHANCING POLITICAL CONSOLIDATION

Over the past decades, GUAM MS have gained solid experience by implementation of joint and mutually beneficial projects in many different spheres. Nevertheless, new developments, evolving geopolitical context and emerging challenges require an advanced level of cooperation and political interaction.

Moreover, for the successful long-term collaboration, it is essential to form a common strategic vision of GUAM, to agree on the prospects and main directions for further development of the Organization. To this end, the Chairmanship aims to expedite the finalization of the strategic document based on the Chairmanship Vision Paper elaborated during Georgia's Chairmanship in 2017. Adoption of this document will lay the basis for making GUAM more effective and result oriented.

The sovereignty and territorial integrity remains to be one the most painful problems and common challenges for all GUAM Members. Unresolved conflicts in GUAM area constitute a major impediment on the way of strengthening the independence, economic and social development of GUAM countries. They also remain a major threat to international peace, stability and security. Therefore, the enhancement of political consolidation, coherent and constructive political interaction must be one of the main priorities of GUAM Agenda. In this context, acknowledging the priority of peaceful resolution of the conflicts in the GUAM area on the basis of the principles of UN Charter and Helsinki Final Act, GUAM member states should strive to ensure raising of the issues related to the unresolved conflicts to the highest level on international agenda.

Cooperation of GUAM MS within the framework of International Organizations

In the view of above-mentioned, the Chairmanship deems necessary to strengthen coordination of GUAM MS within the framework of international organizations, based on the relevant decisions of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

Close cooperation of representatives of GUAM MS within international organizations will also contribute to the implementation of the Organization's goals and promote more active interaction in the areas of mutual interest.

In pursuance of these objectives, the Chairmanship intends to:

- **Pay particular attention to adoption and implementation of Action Plans** between the Permanent Representations of GUAM MS to the International Organizations, particularly, UN, OSCE and Council of Europe;
- **Facilitate and contribute to the practice of adoption of joint statements** of the GUAM MS within the framework of international organizations on the issues of common interest;
- **Continue consultations** with the view to promote the Resolution "Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development";
- **Strengthen cooperation with UN and its institutions.** In this context, the Chairmanship considers it expedient to finalize the ongoing negotiations and sign the respective Memorandums between GUAM and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); and United Nations World Tourism Organization (UN WTO);
- **Activate cooperation with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and World Health Organization (WHO)** to overcome the challenges caused by COVID-19.

II. Further intensifying existing cooperation with GUAM Partners & development of new collaborations with possible partners in GUAM+ formats

Today's global and regional developments highlight the importance to further pursue the close cooperation with existing GUAM Partners, along with development of new GUAM+ formats with other countries and international organizations, based on common interests and values. These new dynamics induce exploration of new opportunities for expanding international and interregional cooperation.

Maintaining stronger partnership with existing partners, as well as promoting new interactions will contribute to further raise GUAM's image and portray the organization as a reliable partner. In this regard, the Chairmanship outlines the primary partners as follows:

GUAM+ USA

The Chairmanship deems it necessary to conduct consultations with American partners and reactivate the GUAM+ US cooperation format. Primary goals can be identified as follows:

- Restore regular high-level meetings for consultations and practice of adopting Joint statements;
- Re-launch the Framework Program of Trade and Transport Facilitation with the focus on transportation/transit, security and stability;
- Upraise Law enforcement and legal advisory cooperation.

GUAM+ Japan

Over the years, GUAM MS enjoyed fruitful cooperation in GUAM+ Japan format based on the Cooperation Programme, signed in 2015. The Japanese side has been strong and active supporter of GUAM, providing its valuable experience in the various spheres, such as tourism, energy and energy security, disaster management, agriculture, transport, medical tourism, water and waste management, investment promotion. In this context, Georgian Chairmanship intends to focus on the following objectives:

- Further maintain cooperation with Japan and upgrade it towards practical implementation of joint projects and initiatives of common interest;
- Enrich this format with new initiatives and expand spheres of mutual interaction;
- Explore the possibility to utilize the Japanese experience and know-how in development and management of transport infrastructure;
- Ensure the follow-up of thematic seminars organized annually for the GUAM experts.

Israel

The Chairmanship welcomes the prospect of forging new cooperation with Israel and believes that this collaboration, considering, Israel's vast knowledge and experience in agriculture, water management, information healthcare, cybersecurity and parliamentary dimension will be efficient and beneficial for GUAM MS. In this regard, the main priority during this year will be the formal establishment of this format and signing of the respective Memorandum at the earliest possibility.

III. REINVIGORATING SECTORAL COOPERATION

Sectoral Cooperation is one of the most important Pillars within the organization. In this regard, the Georgian Chairmanship considers it necessary to enhance result-oriented, targeted approach and further exploit the sectoral potential of GUAM.



In the light of above-mentioned, the Chairmanship will do its utmost to reinvigorate sectoral cooperation in accordance with the main goals of GUAM, decisions, and recommendations of the Council, including those defined in the Joint Statements of the Heads of Governments; as well as in the decision of the Council of Heads of State on the intensification of the GUAM Sectoral Cooperation, adopted at the GUAM Batumi summit on July 1, 2008.

Together with the organizational/technical support of GUAM Secretariat, coordinating countries of Working Groups and other working bodies of GUAM, the Chairmanship will attach particular importance to the enhancement of sectoral cooperation in such fields as economy and trade, transport, customs, science and education, culture, sport, tourism, fight against crime, consular issues and strategic communications as well.

Economy and Trade

The main goal towards the facilitation of trade and economic relations among GUAM MS is to ensure the effective functioning of the GUAM Free Trade Agreement. Therefore, Chairmanship will focus on finalizing ongoing discussions/negotiations in order to sign the “Protocol on regulations determining the country of origin of goods to the Agreement on Establishment of Free Trade Area among the GUAM Participating States of 20 July 2002” that will streamline and facilitate the full-fledged implementation of the mentioned Agreement.

Transport

Popularization of transport corridors

On par with development of transport corridors through GUAM MS, popularization and dissemination of information regarding corridors is a priority. Thus, the Georgian Chairmanship believes that Transport related events will increase awareness of the transport corridors and promote GUAM MS as important nodes in ever-increasing connectivity between Europe and Asia. Moreover, organizing transport related joint events will foster identification of current challenges and opportunities of the corridor and serve as a tool for increasing competitiveness.

Facilitation of Digitalization of transport corridors

Recent years revealed importance of digitized and seamless transport corridors around the globe, especially during COVID-19 that will be increased in the post pandemic years. Therefore, the Chairmanship believes that prioritizing facilitation of digital and seamless multimodal transportation among and through GUAM MS is vital for uninterrupted economic prosperity. Thus, organizing joint meetings with GUAM corridor stakeholders will increase a pace of digitalization.

Customs field

Collaboration of GUAM MS Customs Administrations is one of the most successful formats within the organization. The effectiveness of this cooperation was vividly demonstrated during the Pandemic, when transportation of passengers and goods was carried out without suspension.

In the framework of the GUAM Trade and Transport Facilitation Project, main priority of the Chairmanship is to facilitate the effective implementation of the following two documents, signed in 2019:

- Letter of Intent among customs administrations of GUAM Member States on mutual recognition of Authorized Economic Operators (AEO);
- Letter of Intent among customs administrations of GUAM Member States about use of blockchain technology for verification of certificates of origin of goods moved through the state border of GUAM Member States.

Science & Education; Sport; Culture & Tourism

During the Chairmanship Georgia will pay particular attention to sectoral cooperation in the fields of science and education, sport, culture and tourism as a soft power aimed at preserving peace and security in the region and promote economic development and wellbeing of the GUAM MS.

Georgia will support conducting the regular meetings of thematic Working Groups in these directions as well. Moreover, as the Chairs of the GUAM Science and Education Working Group, the Georgian Chairmanship will attach special importance to collaboration in the fields of General, Higher and Vocational Education:

General Education

Strengthen cooperation to promote and boost visibility of the European Commission flagship project “Eastern Partnership European School in Tbilisi”, aiming to deliver high quality European education for young people with outstanding academic performance, from GUAM MS.

Higher Education

- Facilitate direct contacts between Higher education institutions of GUAM MS for the purpose of students and academic staff exchanges, organization of international meetings, conferences or workshops, development of joint academic programs, qualification improvement trainings, including through respective EU programmes;
- Support double recognition of certificates, diplomas and academic degrees and defining their equivalence according to the legislation of each country.

Vocational Education and Training

Facilitate cooperation and enhance internationalization efforts between GUAM MS in the field of vocation education and training, by means of experience sharing and identifying the mechanisms for fostering VET student and staff exchanges in vocational fields of mutual interests.

Sport

In the field of Sport, the priorities of the Georgian Chairmanship, reads as follows:

- Promotion of human rights dimension in sports as envisaged Tbilisi Declaration of the Council of Europe's Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS);
- Facilitation of sharing the best practices in Grassroots sport, physical education and science between the GUAM MS, through supporting organizing joint measures, respecting the principles of equitable, inclusive and equal treatment and gender equality;
- Supporting joint efforts at the international sport organizations, either to jointly host international sport competitions/events or endorse a bid of each GUAM MS to host international sports events, thus contributing to development of sport tourism and sport ecosystem in the GUAM region.

Culture

The Georgian Chairmanship will facilitate strengthening of cooperation between GUAM MS in the field of culture and cultural heritage through organizing joint cultural events and promote collaboration in literature, theater, cinematography, music, visual arts, library and publishing.

Tourism

Tourism is one of the sectors most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, during Georgian Chairmanship, special emphasis will be made on the further enhancement of cooperation in the field of tourism, particularly, in the direction of supporting Working Group on Culture and Tourism to develop certain programs and projects in the framework of "GUAM" and "GUAM +" as well as on effective coordination of GUAM sectoral cooperation issues on the national level.

To achieve the above-mentioned goals, the Chairmanship will focus on the following:

- Assistance in conducting meetings of the Working Group on Culture and Tourism aimed at further enhancing cooperation in the aforementioned field;
- Assistance in adopting an Action Plan for the working group on Culture and Tourism;
- Facilitation of sharing information between GUAM MS related to their state policies aimed at combating aftermaths of COVID-19 and further development of tourism industry.

Fight against Crime

- Facilitate holding of regular meetings of the Working Group on Coordination of Combating Crime and the Working Group on Cybersecurity, as well as the Working Subgroup on Combating Terrorism, Working Subgroup on Combating Illicit Drug Trafficking, Working Subgroup on Combating Corruption and Money Laundering, Working Subgroup on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration, Working Subgroup on Legal Statistics;
- Contribute to the implementation of the Action Plans of the respective working groups;
- Objectify the activities of the GUAM Working Groups/Subgroups in the law enforcement and anti-terrorist fields, ensuring compliance with the principles of consistency and continuity in their work, focusing on achieving practical results, in particular, strengthening the coordination of the fight against crime, including organized crime.

Consular issues

The Georgian Chairmanship will promote further development of cooperation on consular issues. In this regard, the main priority of the Chairmanship is to finalize and sign “GUAM Consular Convention” that will streamline and facilitate protection of the interests and the rights of citizens within the territories of GUAM MS, which, in turn, will especially improve consular crises coordination, increase the preparedness to respond for emergencies and post-crisis actions.

Strategic Communications

The Chairmanship will pay particular attention to the communication activities of GUAM, in order to raise awareness about the organization, strengthen its image and visibility. One of the main focuses will be effective implementation of the adopted communication documents - “Communication Strategy of GUAM” and “Rules of preparation of declarations and statements by the ODED-GUAM”.

In this regard, Georgian Chairmanship deems it necessary to formally establish Working Group of Experts on Communications. The group will contribute to efforts to advance the communication policy of GUAM, as well as to effective coordination of joint reactions on important events, both online and offline.



IV. Increasing interaction within GUAM Parliamentary Assembly & enhancing cooperation between GUAM PA and other international inter-parliamentary organizations

Given the recent constitutional changes and the increased role of parliament in Georgian politics, during the Chairmanship particular emphases will be laid on the enhancement of Parliamentary diplomacy.

The Chairmanship will facilitate fostering inter-parliamentary dialogue, including inter-regional dimension, and will pay particular attention to the cooperation with other international parliamentary organizations.

In addition, the Chairmanship will host the 16th Bureau Meeting as well as 14th Session of the GUAM PA in Tbilisi at the end of the year.