Dear meeting participants, let me greet you all and thank the meeting organizers for the invitation.

As an opening speech I would like to express confidence in our ability to review any political issue with full compliance with political correctness, expert credibility requirements and observance of universal norms of interrelations, that is avoiding “preteritions”. This is possible, and moreover, it is necessary, and to this day I have never had a situation in my practice both during my official governmental activities and those on the level of non-government organizations, when it would be impossible to lay down and discuss any problem, even the most vital one. I believe this well refers to today’s meeting as well, and with this methodological message let me get down directly to the text.

As you know, the matter concerns the elections in our Republic. They drew much attention, which I might say could to a certain extent be comparable to the attention drawn to South Ossetia in August of 2008. Of course it was related to the expressive, specific character they bore, and to the fact that they revealed a lot of details in the political processes in and around South Ossetia, which would be hard to see with an unaided eye.

As it usually happens, the process of elections had clear-cut calendar frames: it started on 1 September 2011, when the Central Election Commission (CEC) entered into force, and ended on 19 April with the inauguration of the elected president Leonid Tibilov. At the same time, dear colleagues, we all have enough experience of reviewing such issues to understand that political frames of this process are much wider. As for me, for instance, I would have started the reviewing from the moment the President of the Republic of South Ossetia Kokoity had officially stated that he was not going to change the constitution and run for presidency for the third time. He made this statement – which I stress was the key for the formation of inter-political realities in our Republic – on 22 December 2010, that is quite a long time ago. It was made at the press-conference in Moscow, which of course is also not coincidental, and he stressed, that after termination of his second presidential term he was intending to, quote “remain in politics and serve my nation. I will not run for the third term and change the constitution. It is a principle decision. The Constitution is written with the blood of our people and no one will rewrite it to his own interests”.

Further there was a point, when a group of active young men full of initiative, mostly comprised of representatives of power structures, addressed the CEC with request to hold a referendum on the third term. The President did not object to this initiative, but on the 30 May, i.e. four months later, the head of his press-service Vyacheslav Sedov confirmed the President’s position while commenting on this initiative: “The fact that they are going to hold a referendum, is the voice of the people, initiative from below. Kokoity can not ban it, the people have the right to express their will. But in spite of everything Eduard Kokoity will in no way run for presidency for the third time in violation of the Constitution. Of course, the President will take the people’s will into consideration, but nothing more than that. No one has the right to act in violation of the Constitution, we are a state governed by the rule of law, so two terms mean two terms. If the referendum shows that one and the same person can be elected three times, it can be understood that people need stability, they understand that the Republic is being systematically rehabilitated, but at the same time, and I underline it again, Eduard Kokoity will not run for presidency for the third time”.

The stated and repeatedly confirmed position of the President created a new political reality in South Ossetia, and in that new reality a large group of politically active citizens of our Republic set down to investigation of opportunities for preparing themselves to run for presidency. Actually, in early 2011 Russia’s search for the people capable to start the presidential race had also started to shape: through different Ministries and departments they carried out the study of possible candidates, investigation of their strong and weak sides, drawing
up their curriculum vitae, and what’s most important, they were trying to define at least the approximate size of the electoral support of one or the other potential candidates for promotion.

It should be noted here, that at the same time an increasingly pressurized discrediting campaign was being led against Eduard Kokoity. It bore a very volumetric, multi-level, complex character, which took literally everything into consideration, and I bring some examples in the text below, which you are able to familiarize yourselves with. By the way, it involved even some of the Kokoity family name representatives, which caused a kind of bewilderment among us from the beginning, because these kinds of things are not habitual.

30 people submitted their documents for registration in the CEC. And here I will have to say with sarcasm, that in this case, too, we appeared to be “ahead of the whole problem”. Taking into consideration the context of celebration of May 9, this reminded me of the well-known provision regarding the fact, that the Ossetians were the first among the other nations by percentage of the USSR Heroes during World War II; so, these 30 people left that percentage far behind. Mostly those were young men, each of them being absolutely honestly, openly and sincerely sure, that he could work as the President of our Republic just as well as Eduard Kokoity. I have had long and thorough conversations with many of them, they all are my good friends, this was a very singular, interesting psychological phenomenon.

At that time a great tension was raised in the society by the issue of whether or not to register Dzambolat Tedeev, Russia’s wrestling team manager and the main political opponent of President Kokoity. On 30 October 2011, when the CEC was voting on this matter, Tedeev’s supporters gathered in front of the government building and made an attempt to break-through to the CEC; this attempt was stopped by the militia and state security forced. There was a dramatic voting on the CEC session: it was a secret vote, and when they were counting the ballots – imagine the situation – six “yeas” and six “nays”, they drew out the last ballot, the climax of the situation, and the ballot turned out to be a “nay”.

Several dozens of people were detained by the law enforcement bodies for the attempted breakthrough, which gravely affected the condition of the society then and caused heavy consequences. Several days later the statements of the CEC members, Ostaev and Dzhioeva, were published, which said that they had been pressurized, due to which they were forced to temporarily leave South Ossetia out of fear. I think that these episodes should be recognized as unprecedented for the new history of South Ossetia, starting from the moment of declaration of the Republic on 20 September 1990.

Finally 11 candidates were running the elections (some of them withdrew in favor of the others etc.), and by the voting results, just as it was expected, two people reached the second round: Anatoli Bibilov, Minister of the EMERCOM, and Alla Dzhioeva, ex-minister of education. As for A.Dzhioeva, I have to add, that the situation was not all that obvious for everyone, but at least within my circle of experts everyone was certain, that given the support of Dzh. Tedeev’s structure, A.Dzhioeva would collect the comparable result, which happened to be the case – in fact they reached almost identical result of 25%.

The results of the referendum on the status of the Russian language should also be mentioned here: although it has nothing to do with the election process, nevertheless this moment is important. It also caused varied opinions in the society, there were lively discussions, unacceptance of the statehood of the Russian language was voiced on the level of public politics. In spite of this, over 80% of the electors voted for it. It resulted in the fact, that currently the Russian language is institutionalized as the second state language, i.e., equally with Ossetian.

Comparison of the work of the pre-election headquarters (I will not delve into it) was clearly not in favor of Bibilov’s headquarters. Dzhioeva’s headquarters showed a very high organization and efficiency; most important thing was that they worked directly with people. In the compact societies, such as South Ossetia, this, to my opinion, is the key factor of influence – a live work, from person to person. The standardized schemes of political technologies of mass influence, which are successfully applied in Russian provinces, don’t work well with us: here it is eventually the live word which decides everything – that is, how your supporters will convince
people to support you. In this sense Dzhioeva’s headquarters surpassed that of Bibilov’s well in advance. Besides, I have to say, that we all were completely bewildered by the work of the visiting political technologies’ experts in Bibilov’s headquarters, who according to common opinion, failed the whole work and thus greatly inputted in his defeat after the second round of presidential elections.

Dzhioeva took 56.7% against 40% of Bibilov. Naturally, she declared herself as the winner. Here the legal side of the issue comes into force: the CEC did not officially declare the voting results, though unofficially they were stated and moreover, they were handed over to the headquarters of the candidates. The CEC found itself in an extremely complex situation, undergoing and extremely hard pressure, even threats, and the work under such circumstances was certainly extremely tense.

This elections results, even though officially not publicized, became the reason of the explosive increase of tension. And the reason in the first place is, of course, that Anatoli Bibilov was the candidate, openly preferred by Russia; at on the contrary, as for Alla Dzhioeva, they unequivocally made it clear from Moscow to the acting leadership of South Ossetia, that they were not going to work with her.

In this situation in order of emergency, as they say in such cases, that is extremely urgently, a complaint with indication of the violations, committed during the pre-election campaign by A. Dzhioeva, was lodged by the Republican political party “Edinstvo” to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court immediately made a decision to recognize the elections as not valid and addressed a respective letter to the Parliament, which on the very day of its receipt appointed new elections for the 25th March 2012 by unanimous decision (and I stress it, even though today many of the deputies post factum speak otherwise). Dzhioeva, together with her supporters, expressed categorical protest against such development of events and brought the protesters to the Theater square of Tskhinval in front of the government buildings. An unprecedented political crisis broke out in the Republic.

Here with your permission I would like to make a brief deviation from the direct description of events and remind you, that people, indignant and protesting – I stress – against the authorities, were going to deploy a mass protest action on the central square of Tskhinval back in the end of September – early October of 2008. It was this acute unacceptance by the people of the actions of the authorities with regard to the humanitarian assistance, which was coming to the Republic in huge quantities. The “Kokoev’s” power structure, which withstood a colossal military pressure in its power part, that is passed the fracture test during the two days’ of fierce military actions, in its civil component turned out very weak and failed completely. People saw that the officials, who were obliged by their position to deal with that humanitarian aid, that is to help people, who lost their houses and property – many of them had only left what they had had on when they escaped from their burning houses – they saw their indifference, heartlessness, they saw that the humanitarian assistance was embezzled in trucks... It was done in front of those deprived people, who could not get even the minimum for their everyday needs. And so this mass very quickly heated to the boiling point.

I was the seventh head of the humanitarian commission; when the President applied to me and said that the situation was almost helpless and we had to save the situation, I beg you to understand me correctly (I am not new in the work of the state machinery), I was aware that it was impossible to refuse, but at the same time I was well aware that losses to the reputation were not to be avoided. Even if an angel would be the head of the humanitarian commission, he would have to face the same fate – because if was a very hard and ungrateful work, my friends.

Nevertheless, the reason I recall it is to remind about the mass of people heated to the point of explosion, who had to be stopped: in that situation it was simply politically inadmissible to let them out to the central square with that kind of manifestations, and only therefore, out of sense of duty before those unfortunate people, I undertook that work. It was penal servitude, I have to say, which lasted for three months; but through terrible efforts, from seven in the morning till midnight, every day without a break etc, we still made it and relieved the protest
mass. That is the development of events was stopped by a targeted, address distribution of the humanitarian aid in accordance with the first list, compiled by myself (checked by me personally), which was accompanied by a psychological work with the victims.

But after the announcement (unofficial) of the election results it was impossible to stop the people, no means helped: and that’s why we witnessed this unheard of miracle for South Ossetia on the square – a mass, persistent protest rally, which was deployed based on the political motives, that is to reject the acting power. On the contrary, under the given circumstances the enraged mass requested decisive, offensive actions from their leaders. We all know very well the reasons for such attitudes: the humanitarian aid issue was only the “first ring” – if the process of rehabilitation works in the Republic was duly arranged, then the general political situation might be different, but grave mistakes were made starting from rehabilitation of the housing and ending with replacement of communications’ network in Tskhinval. One has to see it with one’s own eyes, the mutilated town, in order to feel the motivation of the citizens, as well as of all the population to such kind of protest.

The attempts of official propaganda to point out the government’s achievements – which of course were also existent – were no longer accepted by the population: people saw the chaotically dug out streets, were choking from the dust, waited for rehabilitation of their houses in years (me, for instance, never saw it rehabilitated, though my mother-in-law, who is the owner of the house, is the veteran of WWII, and as it appeared, she had to be one of the first in the queue to have her house rehabilitated; I just wonder how they came to her now, on the 9th of May, to congratulate her in the partially destroyed house?)

And the most important thing is that the opposition managed to convince most of the people of the gigantic scope of corruption. Well, here we all, being adults, have to understand the responsibility for the words we say: I have no right to assert with probative force, that is legally valid, that the corruption of that scale really took place; I just state as an expert, that this notion ruled in the public opinion – that terrible embezzling was ongoing, which was the reason why they did not reconstruct the houses and could not rehabilitate the town duly etc. The posters were circulating – “they steal our money, sent to us by Russia!” – and you could prove nothing to anybody.

In addition this cadre policy had outrageous examples. It has to be mentioned, that this was one of the weakest sides of the management activities of President Kokoity: he would appoint such people to positions, who not only had no authority among people, but were also openly disliked. Their incomes were well known, and hugely surpassed the scanty incomes of the local employees. So it is understood, that it could not cause the best feelings among the people.

Therefore it is quite understandable, that more and more radical speeches were to be heard on the square. There was a slow, but tangible growth of the anti-Russian moods; conditions were formed, which provided for the possibility to speak about appeals for the support to the European countries, USA, Western international organization, and besides, it would be naïve to assume that the respective intelligence services, acting against Russia and South Ossetia, did not carry out their work on the square.

The law enforcement forces were brought to a higher state of readiness in this situation. The process supervisors, so to say, arrived from Moscow. They organized negotiation processes between A.Dzhioeva, her supporters, and the acting power, and persuaded A.Dzhioeva to sign a compromise Agreement on the 8th of December. In fulfillment of its main point President Kokoity left his post on the 9th of December 2011; Prime-Minister Vadim Brovtsev was appointed as the acting President. Parallel to this, as is well known to those who follow the situation, pressure was laid on Dzh.Tedeev, and finally Tedeev left his post as Russia’s wrestling team manager, and declared about his withdrawal from public politics – although his influence remains, and now it will be interesting to see how it will show on the cadre of the new authority. At the same time, as usually happens in politics, Dzhioeva was abandoned by most of her well-known supporters, and her attempt to stake everything and carry out inauguration ended on
February 9 2012 with her placement in the Republican hospital, where she stayed under custody until the end of elections. That is how the opposition leader, who won the presidential elections, was politically outplayed and neutralized.

Probably, we have to mention the reasons of Alla Dzhioeva’s defeat. For example, a journalist from Moscow, Olga Allenova, says that it was mostly due to an emotional factor, meaning President Medvedev, who shook hands with Anatoli Bibilov while in Vladikavkaz, and this was considered as a guide for action, which is not to be discussed but implemented.

In this case, again, I represent nothing more that my personal expert point of view. Of course, the support of Bibilov by Kremlin was of great importance, and it is clear that Bibilov’s failure had to be excluded a priori. But it was not only Dzhioeva’s headquarters, who worked against Bibiliv, but also – and maybe this will sound in a way unusual and unexpected to external observers – an influential segment of power in the Republic itself; besides, like I already mentioned above, the work of the political technology experts, who were sent in to help him, turned out very unsuccessful, in my opinion – plainly disastrous. It may be that some of them were outbid, or maybe it was a common manifestation of non-professionalism, which we witnessed many times within these years in Moscow. So here is why I am mentioning it: Anatili Bibilov gained his 40% in fact thanks to his personal efforts – it is his own, personal political capital, gained by him despite everything.

The fact that the supreme Russian power unequivocally pointed Bibilov out as the person it was ready to work with, was also Moscow’s mistake. This mistake speaks of poor awareness of the officials who were in charge of preparing these decisions about the mentality of South Ossetians. Here I can not abstain from bringing my prognosis to your attention, which I made long before (I published it in the booklet of the Ethnological monitoring and early conflict prevention network of academician Valeri Tishkov, with whom I have been working for many years) – I warned that this kind of intervention will lead to opposite results, that you could not dictate to South Ossetia to act this way or the other. I was well aware that this prognosis would not please those in the high Moscow offices, but in the manner of expert conscientiousness I considered it necessary to voice it, and I am sorry to state now that this prognosis, just as I expected, was not taken into consideration. That is the expert recommendation of a person, who directly works in South Ossetia and knows the process very well, was rejected by those, who planned the political process in South Ossetia.

The second reason, apart from the “Moscow” one, was rejection of Alla Dzhioeva by President Kokoity and his circle. Here we hear almost the same refrain as in Dzhambolat Tedeev’s case: we all remember, that Alla Dzhioeva started as fierce supporter of Eduard Dzhabeevich during his first elections, and played a considerable role to attract the sympathies of the female electorate to his side. But then their relations worsened, it was followed by her dismissal from the post of the Minister of Education, followed by institution of prosecution, and came to this open uncompromised confrontation.

But still, honorable colleagues, neither the first “Moscow”, nor the second “Kokoev” reasons would be enough determinant for stopping Alla Dzhioeva’s advance to power, if there wasn’t the third reason, more fundamental, and to my opinion, decisive. This reason was the fact that Alla Dzhioeva was still not accepted by the power core of the South Ossetian state as a real ruler. The layer of armed men, who withstood twenty years of struggle, did not recognize Dzhioeva. If she were able to gain recognition among this layer, if these people would say “yes, she won and she has to have the power”, then neither Moscow would be able to stop it, nor, less so, Kokoity would dare to oppose to this. This is the reason which turned out to be the determinant. Why it is the case – is a matter for separate analysis, which is not the purpose of this report.

Besides, it should be noted that Dzhioeva’s struggle, as it was mentioned in our society with sarcasm, caused a rise of enthusiasm in Tbilisi and Washington, there was a number of comments of the instigating character, I bring characteristic examples in the text below.
To summarize I have to say, that a deep split has formed itself in the South Ossetian society. There was a collapse of trust in the power on the whole, and irretrievable at that. It was followed by mutual accusations from the sides in corruption. Unfortunately, even force actions started to occur, there was a terrorist act against Prosecutor General Taimuraz Khugaev, one of the key supporters of Kokoity, and only thanks to lucky coincidence nobody died as a result of a grenade-launcher shot at his apartment (his children were there too).

Nevertheless we had to find a way out of this formed reality; therefore the consolidated public opinion was for holding new elections. Certainly Alla Dzhioeva was flatly against it, but her political resource was worked out. The political process inclined to holding a second election campaign.

Of course the second elections went in a qualitatively different environment. Every candidate who planned to run the elections, could not but understand that his first task was to unite the society. Surely nobody in his right mind would ignore the distinctly expressed will of the majority. Therefore all of those who came forward as the candidates were starting from stating the split. This split touched upon the employees (at our University, for instance, and Taimuraz Kokoev, who is present here, knows it better than me, they were even collecting signatures against Dzhabelich, the fact which was hardly possible to even see in one’s nightmare), in the neighborhoods (on the street I live – and we are neighbors with Dzhabelich – the neighbors became split too, some were for him, the others distinctly against him), even among the relatives and in families (I know a lot of families and relatives, where people became opposed). Is was a very deep and overwhelming phenomenon, that’s why the first condition put was to overcome this split; one did not have to reinvent a wheel – any candidate was obliged in this situation to invite for cooperation the healthy powers from all political groups, really taking part in public process. Eventually, one way or the other, that is how it turned out.

Finally the competition went among the four registered candidates. The CEC, which was taught a bitter lesson, took quite strict measures to limit the number of candidates; this was facilitated also by introduction of the procedure of passing the state languages test. Here we could argue about concrete details: if you ask me, I think it looks somehow not very decent to make the person you plan to entrust with leading the Republic write a dictation. But at the same time, the procedure of checking the real knowledge of the state languages was quite useful. And purely in a political sense, because it helped to eliminate those who were undesirable in the election process.

Four candidates remained: Leonid Tibilov and Dmitri Medoev, who were more preferable than David Sanakoev and moreover Stanislav Kochiev (the unchallenged leader of the Communist party for many years). In this political competition David Sanakoev managed quite unexpectedly for many people (though again, I was not excluding such development of events, the group of young people around him worked very actively) to slightly outstrip Dmitri Medoev, and L. Tibilov and D. Sanakoev reached the second round.

Well, here the situation was quite clear, dear colleagues, Tibilov was the obvious winner, and that is exactly how it turned out – Leonid Tibilov won the elections and was inaugurated on the 19th.

In this respect David Sanakoev represents quite a demonstrative phenomenon. He just turned 35, just before the second elections, until that the voting age did not allow him to take part. He got 42.6%, and I believe it is a very good political starting capital for the future presidency circle. Actually, that is what I’ve been telling him, that this cycle was not for him, he had to position himself for the future elections, where as we hoped, he would be running for the supreme position.

The winner, Leonid Tibilov, got 54.1%, and I draw your attention to the fact that this practically matches with the result of Eduard Kokioity at his first elections, where he got at that time about 53.5%; this is not coincidental – it may be said that typologically there exists a deep analogy. Then too there was the second tour, and then, by the way, Stanislav Kochiev reached
the second round, got the result close to that of David Sanakoev’s – a little over 40%. An interesting comparison.

Of course, Stanislav Kochiev hoped to reach the second round, but two negative factors worked against it. First of all, a poor health condition – he had a stroke, and as they say, it was visible. Second of all, psychologically people became tired of him, for so many years, and constant nominations… in general, a precise copy of Zyuganov in Russia – one and the same thing for years. True, everybody thought he would get from 12 to 15%, but it turned out that he only got a little over 5%.

The voter turnout was high, I have to say, I expected it to be no more than 65%, but it turned out that over 70% came to polling stations, and this is a high indicator of political activity – taking into consideration what the society had to undergo. In this case, obviously, something I call a statehood instinct worked: people wanted to have all this finished, break away from this political trap they found themselves in, and to start a new normal political life with a new president – exactly what is going on currently.

New appointments are starting; as they say in cases like this, a “bulldog fight under the carpet” is going on – influence groups around Leonid Tibilov are trying to create better positions for themselves, but that already is a routine of a political process.

I hope I managed to provide enough explanation regarding the main points, considering the tiredness from the road. Thank you for your patience.

(K.Dzugaev answers the question about the difference between the beginning of Kokoity and Tibilov’s presidency with regard to the Georgian side of the conflict):

Eduard Kokoity started his pre-election campaign as an accentuated anti-Georgian presidential candidate, and won considerable popularity and recognition. Actually it was dictated mainly by the logic of the pre-election campaign, because Chibirov’s policy consisted of a gradual, cautious advance of the settlement process, which was considerably opposed in the society then. And in that context Kokoity used the situation, came forward as a bright patriotic leader and clear anti-Georgian. This helped him a lot then to win the first elections. As the time went by the events were developing in a way we all remember very well…

Now in this regard Leonid Tibilov demonstrates other political rhetoric. There was no need for him to accentuate anti-Georgian rhetoric, as he was facing another main task, as I already mentioned, an internal political one, a task of consolidation of the society. That’s why a great part of his discourse was dedicated to this subject matter – rehabilitation of the republic, not only economical, of the construction projects, but in the first place rehabilitation of a normal community. Therefore I think that from this position it will be politically easier for him to start with regard to the Georgian-Ossetia set of problems. Perhaps, it is an advantage in this situation, because it was mentioned here that we have to gradually struggle out from the 20th century. My colleagues know that I have always been a cautious historical optimist, and I can say that at least at the level of civil dialogue, which had started thanks to our efforts as well, this process will continue and develop; as for directly at the political level, I will hardly open a new ground if I say that President Saakashvili’s regime stands as an insurmountable political obstacle.

Paata Zakareishvili: Why it is impossible to surmount it?

K.Dzugaev: No politician in South Ossetia will ever go for any contacts with mister Saakashvili or his circle.

Gogi Aptsiauri: You have described the situation in South Ossetia as it was until this day, I have read somewhere that this political crisis was the impetus for revival of the civil life in South Ossetia, the new NGOs are being established etc. Do you think things became more liberal after this political crisis or everything remains as it was?
K.Dzugaev: Russians have a proverb to apply to this situation: “every cloud has a silver lining”. As you remember, dear colleagues, I worked as a state advisor in charge of the civil society. This work has always been very specific and unique, it referred to the key points of constructing the internal political process. During the years mister Brovtsev was leading the government, year after year, supported by all the NGO representatives, I have been making attempts and repeatedly addressed the government to provide financial support to the activities of the civil sector. That is, to do what has been going on for a long time now without any problems in Russia, Abkhazia, to say nothing of the western experience, where it a practice that goes without saying. And year after year mister Brovtsev with an enviable regularity responded to us with a complete “zero,” despite of my warnings that such a lack of attention is not good, it negatively reflects on the internal political process, directly on the process of formation of the sprouts of civil society, which appear in our country. Apparently, it was linked, as I see it now, to this “tug-of-war” between Brovtsev and Kokoity. But it ended by the fact, I might be mistaken but I have the feeling, that when we came up to the elections practically the majority of the governmental organizations just plain refused to support this leadership, and I believe, they did right. For instance, currently I publicly and openly state without concealing, that mister Brovtsev bears his own considerable responsibility for the development of events we had at the first elections in 2011. He now left the Republic together with his “Chelyabinsk locusts”, and I hope that the subsequent Moscow politics in this regard will take into consideration this sad experience. I am convinced that Leonid Tibilov understood correctly what happened, and deep progress will take place under his term in this respect, and going back to your question I can definitely say, that certainly the level of political freedom in South Ossetia has noticeably increased, and the fact that the process of formation of new parties has started now is very demonstrative, symptomatic. I am aware that the minimum of seven people started directly to form the parties. Two parties are already in the process of registration, others are approaching. On the whole, this is a positive indicator, because we have to go through this period too, when there will occur a natural selection from among the multitude of the newly formed party bodies, and in some 8-10 months we will encounter a new internal political structure, and plus this “body” of civil society (“politia”, a Greek term used by Aristotle) within this 8-10 months will see a considerable, maybe even a spasmodic development. Political opportunities for that have already completely formed themselves, starting from the leader factor, personified in Leonid Tibilov, and ending with general political circumstances – because there can be no turning back to what had been before the December crisis: completely new attitudes to this matter have already formed in the public opinion.

G.Aptsiauri: If there is a possibility for appearance of independent media in South Ossetia?

K.Dzugaev: I am quite pessimistic in this regard. I think on the printed media and TV quite a complete control will remain, and there are reasons for that (if you are interested in a more profound answer, we can discuss it); as for the internet, Irina Gagloeva is right to say that there are no limits here, I am opening a personal webpage these days myself, there will be expert materials published there, you can have a look for yourselves if you are interested.

Lira Kozhaeva (Tskhovrebova): I liked this question very much, because in gives me an opportunity to express what I feel as a matter of my internal human pride. In spite of all the negative sides of this political crisis of the first presidential elections, we were suddenly able to see something we (me personally) haven’t even dreamt of or expected from our society. Let me start with saying that I did not vote for Alla Dzhioeva, not because I did not sympathize with her, but because I did not sympathize with those who stood behind her: I voted for Anatoli Bibilov, and wanted him to win very much. But the very fact that the Caucasian mentality, that a woman
can not be a president (voiced, by the way, by our ex-president – who said that “she is a woman, she can not become a president”) did not show itself in South Ossetia, as it appeared; a woman won, and in a fair struggle, too. This doesn’t mean there were no violations, but there were no complaints either, there were no court trials, that is I mean to say, that the elections were honest, officially and legally. A woman won, and it is cool. This is the first point. The second point is that the people came out to the square. People were not content. Within the 23 years of Georgian-Ossetian conflict there was no precedent like that. And I say nothing of the period before 1989, at that time it was completely our of the question. This point is very important for me: as a representative of an NGO, I have always been complaining and keep complaining, that there is no civil society in South Ossetia, whereas here all of a sudden I was able to witness the great resource available in our society. The third point is that during a round table in the editorial office of “Yuzhnaya Ossetia” newspaper, organized by Zalina Tskhovrebova, I came up to Alla Dzhioeva and said to her, that “you lost the elections when you did not occupy the government building when people poured out there”; I was shaken by her answer – “Lira, if only you could see the faces of those guys, you would understand that they would shoot, I did not want to come to power through blood”. This was a woman’s answer, and it makes me proud too, because if it were a man, he would have stepped on blood and gone up to the eighth floor, and I will have nobody arguing with me over this point. It was a tremendous act on her part.

How everything went on further, and whether it was right? Of course it was wrong, of course they tore away her victory from her, and of course, it must be a great psychological stress to go through such milestones of pre-election campaign, and suddenly have your ready victory taken away from you. Nevertheless, this is what happened. Give an assessment? What assessment is there to give? Yes. She won, but they took it away from her. This was the decision of the Supreme Court, and now to break the decision of the Supreme Court – this would be another violation of the law, this would be a total bacchanalia.

As for the impetus the society received from these events... It was a huge impetus. First of all, creation of parties. I am also creating a political party, I mean, I will not be even in the list of members, I will only be helping those women whom we managed to unite; it is a powerful, progressive, full of initiative, professional women, who are capable of doing a lot. The first goal of this party is the formation of a civil society, and to help this leadership to fulfill what it had promised to the people, because it also will do nothing without people. And while the leadership will be constructing, we will be beside, we will help, but if the leadership stops constructing, and we will see that we are going back to the past – well, then we will oppose this leadership.

Are new NGOs being formed? No, they are not, because there is no funding; because international organizations do not work in South Ossetia – they only work with two or three NGOs, with whom they have the past experience of cooperation and whom they trust. There is a huge NGO resource, because when OSCE worked there and they were running a small grants’ program etc, the third sector blossomed in South Ossetia. Unfortunately, now it is not the case, while then there were up to 50 acting organizations. But without funding – I am sorry to say, but it is more of a communist propaganda, you can not do much without.

As for the independent media... It is a very good question, but you must agree, that it has hardly been a month since the inauguration, and now it has all just weighed upon poor Tibilov, one has to move slowly, slowly, but I have the feeling that it became easier to breathe. Not entirely, of course, it is too far for that still, but it is a process, a long process, lengthy, and I believe, we will achieve it, I hope for that very much. As for the web-based information, well, Irina Yuryevna alone sometimes is writing such things; one has to be a really brave person for that; but anyway, it is an indicator.

K.Dzugaev: Let me remind you, that a Social-Democratic party was formed under Kokoity’s term, I attended the constituent assembly, congratulated them on the occasion and so on; by subsequent decisions it was terminated. Now such things are no longer possible – that is exactly what I mean when I speak about qualitatively new political conditions.
Zalina Tskhovrebova: I will not talk long. Actually, Kosta Georgievich was quite thorough in his speech about what happened in our society; the only thing I would like to add with regard to the question asked by Goga is the following: The society was really deeply split after the political rally on the square. And after that I was most of all impressed by the fact that Leonid Tibilov managed to gather in his headquarters political powers, which seemed completely antagonistic to me. And it was exactly this unity that inspired hope in people, that we will again become a consolidated society, that this contradiction, which was to be heard during civil confrontation, when the society was split, it was especially dangerous, because our society is very small, and often the split occurs even inside the families. That as far as Tibilov is concerned.

Besides, in the line of my work I often encounter first persons, talk with them, and maybe it will be pleasant for Lira and Susan to hear, that I have spoken with Leonid Tibilov the day before I came here, and since he himself was in due time in the past involved in the negotiation process he said, that certainly it is a very important dialogue, that he is aware of it; that he is fond of the idea of our organizing a female political party, and I am afraid of too much optimism, if I could say so, but he was saying that it was very good, that this kind of dialogue contributed to development of the society, and that was definite, that we could not be a closed society, and the more information about us goes out into the surrounding world, the more the hope that we will be developing positively. And that too, makes me optimistic, of course.

Naturally, as a journalist, during the pre-election meetings I was most of all interested in the question regarding the freedom of speech. If you were following attentively the press, including during the crisis, and during the presidential elections, of course, when you are politically committed, when you are as if between Skylla and Charibdis – between conscience and employee, that, of course, it is a very complex maneuver, if you agree. And in this sense we keep hoping and appealing to law and printed media, and there was also an opinion voiced, that if there are proper sponsors, if there is a proper initiative showed, then the freedom of speech has to be stimulated. So that I have a hope, and I hope it wont only remain a hope, but it will be consolidated by real steps. It goes without saying that we consider the greatest achievement of the crisis, related to the presidential election, the fact that there is no return to the status we had before the crisis, to that state of the society.

Manana Mebuke: Thank you very much, that was very interesting information. Regarding the civil society: you mentioned the political parties, and that is understandable, but civil society – it consists of NGOs, initiative groups, if they will develop, expand, create this kind of expert clubs, or what? As far as I know, international organizations were forbidden to cooperate with representatives of the civil society: will the international organizations expand their cooperation?

K.Dzugaev: Yes, of course. The formed conditions are favorable for demonstration of such activity. What I called the “body” of the public, civil activity; of course, in the first place it is the political parties, but naturally, the environment must be appropriate for such civil activity. There are conditions for it, there is motivation, there is historical demand; but there is no money – just what my colleagues have mentioned. Up until now the government has been regularly refusing to provide it; maybe now the government will finally allocate budget resources; in this case we will witness a quick, and I would even say, qualitative growth, because the most important thing is that there are people who are ready to work. As for the international organization, then strictly speaking I would say, it was never really forbidden: on the contrary, and I am a witness and facilitator of it during my activities, that all the international organizations willing to cooperate, work on the territory of South Ossetia, are most welcome, we invite them for a dialogue, we are ready to consider etc, etc. And I don’t see any new obstacles appearing now. It is true, I know Leonid Tibilov very well in this regard, not only his humane but a political portrait of this man: in spite of his Soviet KGB past he is open, he is person with
open world-view, he is ready for a dialogue with any, as they say, interested persons and organizations, who wish to do something there – no problems, as they say.

One has to assume, that from Russia’s side there will be much more attention given to this process, and considerable activity will be demonstrated from there too – a fact, that was not in place in the past; I was even surprised a little, as to why they were so passive, but maybe some kind of complacency was ruling in Moscow, that everything was allegedly all right in South Ossetia. But the situation showed, that things were far from what they believed them to be.

I am convinced, that general political conditions are contributing to the growth of civil activity and creation of new organizations, and the only condition for that at least some minor noticeable funding has to start from different sources.

M.Mebuke: Still, I salute women coming to power, and no one will dissuade me on this matter. The question is as follows: if she were from a family, which participated or suffered in this conflicts, in the war, if then she would find support among the representatives of power structures, or she would simply not be supported because she was a woman?

K.Dzugaev: I support the opinion of Lira Filippovna, that the gender factor was not decisive here. More role was played of course by the political orientation of Alla Dzhioeva. And that layer I mentioned, which constitutes the core of the state, it did not accept her mostly due to her political orientation. That is Dzhabelich for them… the question is concretely about a struggle for power, in this particular case it is more about the structure of Dzhambolat Tedeev personally, who was Kokoity’s uncompromising political opponent; one has to admit, that Eduard Kokoity managed to secure himself a considerable, and in this sense, decisive support in this power layer. Another thing is that there was enough political experience and perhaps a worldly maturity to abstain from blood-sed. Meanwhile, the situation was very dangerous in this sense, there were determined people from both sides, including the youth, but in this layer – why I keep returning to is so persistently – it had already had it set in its core, that under no circumstances was it possible to shoot at each other. Well, maybe it might go as far as the fist-fight… but having it reach the irreversible consequences – they managed to avoid it, and several “hot heads”, who were active there – they were calmed down. That is I mean to say, that the female factor was not decisive. Alla Dzhioeva might become a president – if this condition were fulfilled.

M.Mebuke: The personnel, who worked under Kokoity – will all of them be replaced, or what?

K.Dzugaev: Maybe, we have to start with the power component. I still see no changes there, but most probably it is related to the fact that the Moscow supervisors of the process are still on the stage of determination. As for the civil part of the power construction, of course it will undergo very deep, radical changes: almost nobody from the “Kokoiev” people, of those who were inside his circle, will stay there. Of course there are simple officials… as an example, I would like to mention my colleague Boris Chochiev, who was recently appointed as the head of the presidential administration: just like me, he also worked with Eduard Dzhabbeevich, but we were not considered his people. That is, Leonid Kharitonovich will construct a completely new set of personnel, and he is right to do so. I am surprised at something else, of which I will say a few words. Appointments of some people have taken place – they too are our colleagues, we have good relations etc. – whose political purposefulness might cause doubts with the observers; that is, a person got 0.8% of votes, and suddenly they appoint him for a quite serious position, it is something that doesn’t normally happen in a normal political process. But apparently, it is linked to the current period, Leonid Kharitonovich, as usually happens, has to swim over these months… therefore I think that within the next three-four months he will deal with the personnel issues and the main appointments.
G. Tarkhan-Mouravi: I have the following question. From what I’ve heard I understand that political orientation means orientation at certain people. The second point is that in fact the political situation was solved by the opinion of the armed men – is that correct? How are things going to develop further? Does that mean that further too, the armed men, approximately two-three thousand people, who earlier controlled the situation – they still keep their weapons, will they continue to influence the process, or there will be a transfer of authority into the hands of civilians, and in what timeframe is this possible?

K. Dzugaev: The experience that was gained within the past period, including during the several political crises we had in 90s, in 2000s, certainly points to the fact that the decisions, taken in the power center always have the form of civil decisions. There are no power “pressings” going on there, but talks, the process of coordination of interests in that layer. It is understandable in this regard, that Eduard Dzhabeevich preserves a certain influence even now, and now he is a figure having opportunities of influence inside South Ossetia; but at the same time it is quite clear that a new political reality has formed itself, and in this new reality Leonid Kharitonovich feels quite confident in this armed layer: mentally, politically and socially – in a wide sense of this word – he is part of this layer.

Remark: And they all voted for him.

K. Dzugaev: The overwhelming majority did.

G. Tarkhan-Mouravi: That is, we are talking about a civil society, about politics, about print media, while in reality the decisions are taken by a small group of people…

K. Dzugaev: The dialectics of this process was quite clearly visible during the December crisis. You see, the shooting in the air was done as a warning, but in no way for forced suppression – this is very important. Though the opposition kept very loudly and even clamorously repeating that “they were suppressed by force” – well, no, they did not use force to suppress them: they just did not let them in, and that is another issue, they limited them – as Lira Filippovna said quite correctly, Alla Alexeevna did not manage to occupy the government building, because the power structures’ members stood there, who were internally motivated and convinced that they could not let her in. I repeat once again, that if they were sure in their hearts, that yes, she won and they had to let her in, then no Moscow would be able to stand against it, and no Dzhabelich would have stopped it. But nevertheless, by the form of this action the crisis was solved politically, not forcedly. Fortunately, it was solved through elections.

Marina Salukvadze: Personally me, I have a great respect for Leonid Kharitonovich, for some while in the past we used to be colleagues, people tend to get to know each other better during the meetings. My question is the following: The whole of this process, all this dynamics, the person that appeared today and occupies the post of the president – how did it appear in the first place, how did it come to the scene? I want to be understood correctly, because I think that this is absolutely the person who was able to smooth the red-hot situation that was formed. What is the role of the “Big patron”? All of us here have good relations, but I would not like us to go prettifying things here, holding things back or even lying into each other’s eyes. I ask this question from a positive point of view. So, does it mean that Moscow decided to meet the interests of the South Ossetian community. If you could answer this question; because there were other people there too, whom you respect or not respect, representative of the young generation David Sanakoev, whom many of us sympathize with and support. I think everyone is interested in this – if we can talk on this subject; if not – I remove the question, it is posed without evil intentions. I will not go deeper into it, but – with consideration of the society and agreement from above: how did this figure appear?
K. Dzugaev: I think I will be able to answer this question to a certain extent. The thing is, that as usually happens, the Moscow supervisors always have a “bench warmer”. Leonid Kharitonovich, let me remind you, was acting as a “technical candidate” during Kokoity’s second elections; Eduard Dzhabeevich won 98% of votes, in such a good Soviet style. That is even back than Leonid Kharitonovich was in that row; it is a small “bench” – there are about 8-10 people there. But after the December collapse in Russian politics on South Ossetian direction, then obviously quite big powers became involved to find a solution to the formed collision, which was extremely unpleasant to Moscow. At that point they held a review, as Ira Gagloeva has put it, a certain “casting”, and then, of course with consideration of public opinion, a circle of 5-6 people was defined, who might be presented as new people. Moreover, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that several of the earlier 30 candidates were eliminated, who wanted to repeatedly come forward as the candidates, and that was done in a quite accentuated manner, and I think it was right. Another thing is that I would rather let Bibilov run the second campaign; though here I am not sure in my estimation of the situation, maybe, in this case it was better seen from above (but still, 40% is not a small result…). But even Bibilov did not come forward as a candidate.

So, as I see it, a decision was taken to bring out completely new people to the scene, in terms of really going for the supreme position. And Leonid Kharitonovich, it seems to me, in this situation was seen and demanded by new people in Moscow, who were tasked to deal with the situation formed in a small country. That is how he was politically activated, and I think that those new people who were now dealing with the issue, did right in this regard. These four people, who were finally let out for voting – this construction turned out to be sustainable eventually. It was clear that Leonid Kharitonovich was the main figure, it was understood from the beginning by those groups, who started funding him from inside – because there were 4-5 quite different groups acting around him, who were interested in his promotion. And the question was only how compatible might be Medoev, or Sanakoev, who was not viewed seriously then. Therefore the promotion of Leonid Tibilov was a result of a deep and on the whole correct elaboration of the position in South Ossetia and the decision-making of the new supervisors of the process – that is the summarized answer I’d provide.

I. Gagloeva: From my side I would like to correct Kosta (we have certain contradictions). It was clear that Tibilov was the leader, but it seems to me that an interesting tendency defined itself in our society: after what happened in November-December, when they dealt like that with Dzhioeva’s victory, then the second elections showed that the society was not favorable to anybody in particular. And it is not clear where the notion came from, that Medoev was one of the main ones: we carried out surveys, and they showed in Tskhinval David was seriously leading as compared with the others, we were surprised ourselves (the questioning was carried out in January). As for the further course of the election campaign, David had considerable chances to win. The reason he did not win was due to bad organization in his headquarters, he had a quite complex situation there. He gained his votes without a properly organized campaign. While Tibilov had it organized on the highest level: organization of his work… I have lived in this Republic my whole life, I have visited many headquarters, but I was plain shocked by the organized and precise manner of work I saw in this headquarters. And another humane point of view that I would like to mention: a very bad service (though from the higher point of view it is good) was served by the fact that Sanakoev has never said anything principally bad. His supporters insisted that he disowned Kokoiev, even if in filthy language, but the only thing he did he finally vowed at the cemetery, and even that was done in a very reserved manner and did not make much impression: he decided not to debase himself by using indecent technologies. Maybe it is even good that he did not stoop, because there is little pleasantness in filth… And I completely disagree with your remark, Ruslan, that the power structures all supported Tibilov:
the situation there was 50/50, they supported Sanakoev too. I mean to say that Sanakoev in this presidential race was a serious political force. That is there was no clear favorite.

Now I want to say about Alla Dzhioeva: I think, that we can not underestimate her situation. This person had won, nobody gained as many votes as Alla Dzhioeva did in an absolutely natural and very complex competition. Nobody gained as many as 17000 votes. The numbers that were mentioned with regard to Eduard Dzhabeevich, he really gained them at that time, but you know for yourselves, what kind of period it had been – we had to be consolidated, and we acted adequately to the situation we were in. While now she won. Another issue is that she herself did not expect this kind of victory; and nevertheless, that Agreement, an unprecedented illiterate agreement, which appeared as a document with all of its legal and other strangeness, nevertheless Dzhioeva went for this agreement; as a result a situation was formed to make it possible to hold the second elections: it was the continuing solution to the conflict situation. The first thing was that the bloodshed was avoided, and it was mostly provoked exactly by representatives of official leadership, and since there were hotshots among Dzhioeva’s supporters, it is clear that there were complications, and little was needed… here I agree with Kosta. But the fact that we still had the second stage – Dzhioeva could not initiate these processes in such a situation, but in principle she supported them; anyway, she might be negative about them, and she expressed it, but in general, everything was within adequate frames. And I am positive that first of all, she remains in the history of our country one way or the other – though it is premature to speak about her withdrawal from political life, I believe she will show herself, maybe not so vividly, but who knows, we are so unpredictable, especially our politicians – but in any case, the fact that she became the figure who actually removed the clan (I mean the Kokoity), who was, with all the certain positive moments in our historical fate, nevertheless… she managed to solve this problem, with her people. The second thing is that I don’t want to say that our civil society is weak, our civil society has always been on a high level; I’ll remind you that in due time in the past the regional committee party secretary Felix Sanakoev (in the Soviet times it was a very rare precedent that people might gather and replace the secretary, who was loved in the Central Committee in Georgia, in Moscow – he was such a good party figure). A different thing is of course the matter of specific subjective and objective reasons before the recognition of our independence by Russia, they created some special atmosphere, which unfortunately was sublimated into some sort of pathological silence on our part for quite a long period, because sometimes it is really difficult to talk for us due to many reasons – not because somebody is afraid of something or whatever, but too many eyes and ears of too great number of observers are turned at us. But, as they say, there exists a boiling point and a patience climax, and in this regard there was a correct remark, that the situation allowed to keep silence during the previous leadership – now the society has to control the situation. And generally, the parties Kosta had mentioned are ready for it: one way or the other they will turn into real political parties; now, to put it mildly, not all of them are like that.

Ruslan Kozaev: One more word. We have had the last elections. If they were extended for another week and a half, with the election campaigning that was in place, it is unclear as to who would win, David Sanakoev or Leonid Tibilov. This is also a very important point. And let us not say that David Sanakoev was a weak political power. From the very beginning people were saying that he did not stand a chance, he was young, inexperienced…

K.Dzugaev: That is, roughly speaking “We are tired of Slava Kochiev”, “Dima Medoev came from outside and wants to become a president”, “David is too young” etc.

I.Gagloeva: Well, Dmitri Medoev, by the way, had a very low rating from the very beginning.
K.Dzugaev: About the rating. I remember the surveys very well, which were carried out by Kabisov’s supporters, and they had Georgi seriously leading as well. However, dear colleagues, there exists such a notion as academic science. We had this kind of research carried out in the Republic, and it was done by a professor from Moscow, Khaikin, and they were supervised by Kosta Dzugaev. That’s where I have this data from – they were gained using a reliable methodology, tested on many occasions. In Abkhazia it gave out the result of 0.5% preciseness. In this regard the situation was quite clear. Khaikin pointed out, and I supported his opinion, that there might be an unexpected thing emerging, including between Medoev and Sanakoev, that is exactly how it happened. Although I heard circulating opinions, that in reality Medoev gained more, but they allegedly pulled out Sanakoev. I don’t know how technically it is possible to arrange, there were several hundred people observing, unless they invented something special, which I can not even imagine…

In no way can we say that Sanakoev was weak! Because a priori a person who gained 42% of the votes is a very strong politician. And with a clear prospect at that, which is the most important in this respect. If he, with God’s help, avoids some impulsive steps, than it is quite clear that at the next elections he is going to be a particularly obvious candidate, and everyone understands that.

R.Kozaev: Agreement between the candidates was initiated by him.

K.Dzugaev: There are clever people beside him, who plan his actions well.

L.Kozaeva (Tskhovrebova): I would like to answer Marina’s question concretely, as to where Leonid came from. “Casting” – is exactly where we see the influence of Moscow, and I believe it is just great that they held it: whether correct or not, but it is good. As for the four candidates that remained, they all were favored by Moscow, they all came from Moscow, only from different places – some came from Kremlin, some came from the oligarchs, some came from other places, but all of them were from Moscow. I think that one way or the other, Moscow would accept any of them, because whoever would come to power, even Alla, they all had to cooperate with Moscow, because it is not possible to rule the country without it at this point. The third thing: David Sanakoev got involved in the campaign too late, he was the only one who did not go to Alla Dzhioeva and did not ask for her support, all the rest did. Leonid Tibilov – I am sure of it, it is my personal opinion – won only because Alla had supported him, Dzhambolat Tedeev’s guys supported him. And this is well known to Tibilov’s headquarters too. Officially she did not support anyone, but half of her headquarters worked for Leonid Tibilov. This is just a statement of the fact, in reality it is good that everything worked out this way.

As for David, I congratulated him with a great victory, because taking into consideration the time he had at his disposal, taking into consideration the human resources that were all taken apart by the time he got involved in the struggle, and in fact he remained only with the youth, and he gained 42% - it is a shocking victory.

In reality everything is for the best, because the situation in South Ossetia is such that we need an experienced person like Leonid Tibilov. And I have no doubts – knock on wood – that David Sanakoev will be the next.

G. Aptsiauri: Mister Kosta, you said that the new leadership is ready to start the dialogue with international organizations. I remember, during our last meeting there was a discussion between Dina Alborova and Paata Zakareishvili concerning the ways for these organizations to get to South Ossetia. Dina insisted that it is only via Russia. Has the position in this regard changed? Though, as you said, this question is put aside for a separate discussion, therefore I remove it.
M.Salukvadze: Whom did the ex-president Kokoity’s team support at this election? And what do you think about the person who is an acting Prime-minister? The question is to all of us.

K.Dzugaev: Some people close to Kokoity made quite positive remarks about David Sanakoev’s success. Might this be considered as support in the pre-election campaign? I have no direct evidence, although in the society (in its considerable part) there exists the opinion that allegedly Kokoity was supporting Sanakoev.

I.Gagloeva: People who were associated with Kokoity in the society did in no way position themselves during the elections. Imagine the situation with “Edinstvo” party: they wanted to support somebody, and you can not imagine what was going on in the candidates’ headquarters: in fear they sent people there with a request not to support them!

Kosta had already mentioned it – it was the first time we had a split in the family name (the Kokoevs).

K.Dzugaev: Marina Salukvadze mentioned the property construction. Within this ten years a solid, ramified property construction has formed itself in the Republic, which of course looked for political cover for itself; and in this sense I am convinced that relevant work was carried out by Tibilov’s headquarters, and with Sanakoev’s headquarters. To what extent it is successful we will see within the next 4-5 months. I think in this sense we will have deep changes. It comes to jokes: one can not even take a pebble from the river – it turns out it already belongs to somebody. We never had anything like that before, nobody will tolerate it.

L.Kozaeva (Tskhovrebova): Kokoity’s men supported David. The thing is that Leonid Tibilov suffered greatly from Kokoity’s regime: he was unemployed for five years, he was persecuted, and naturally, he would not go compromising Kokoity’s supporters. And David – he is intelligent, he is young, the choice was limited – it was easier to agree with David, to find a compromise, than with Tibilov. I think that was the way these people thought, therefore many of them were trying to openly support him, but he stopped them.

I.Gagloeva: About the prime-minister – he is accepted positively, the attitude toward him is good, almost from all the society. It is the first time I have witnessed such a phenomenon – almost everyone.

R.Kozaev: I’ve known him for a long time. He is a workaholic. He delves into everything – and he is a brilliant engineer, he doesn’t give out directives until he learns the matter all the way through. We lay hopes on him.

M.Mebuke: Did Kokoity leave politics, or is he going to return into politics: participate in parliamentary elections etc.?

K.Dzugaev: I think, he will make a lengthy enough pause in the sense of public political activity. But as for the real participation and influence, undoubtedly it will continue.

I.Gagloeva: I also think that he will stay in politics. Moreover, he will look around, and in spite of a terrible, dark situation that he had created and which he is to blame for, nevertheless there are bright moments in his political career, and he has experience, and he will still show himself from a positive side; analyzing the situation and being aware of the unofficial information, I think he will show himself. According to my information, he is preparing for some specific role. You can criticize him from morning till night, he provided enough reasons for that, but he is not silly: he understands well that his party “Edinstvo” is just a pure bluff, he will have to do serious things to revive it. Maybe with some other party, I don’t know…
In a certain way I find myself in a more complicated situation than Kosta Dzugadze, because he was covering the events that had already taken place within the last couple of years, whereas I will have to focus on the future events – our elections are forthcoming; besides, the discussion we had had was also focusing on the future, which is also an indicator of the fact that everybody is interested in what will happen next. In this sense, if we were to put the current situation in Georgia in one word, in would be “vagueness”. I think that vagueness of the future would be the most precise characterization of the situation.

To start with, let me say a few words about the past and current situation. I will touch upon the political, socio-economic situation in Georgia, and the way this election will affect the Georgian- Ossetian relations.

As far as the social situation is concerned, I think there is no doubt that some positive social processes have taken place within the last several years; though I am quite critically disposed with regard to the government’s policy, but in some areas the success was quite impressive. Mostly it concerns petty corruption, it concerns such specific areas as, for instance, the traffic police (ГАИ), some other spheres, but at the same time I have to mention that all this success was reached during the first period, before 2006, after which the problems started both in the political and in the social spheres. But if we talk about the current period, then I am even a bit surprised that the situation is not so bad and there is some noticeable progress – economically and socially, though one would expect something different. For example, according to the official data, the economic growth in Georgia within the last year was about 6.8%, in Armenia, which was ahead of Georgia during all these years by the growth rates, it is lower – about 6.4%, Azerbaijan, which was the world champion in terms of economic growth – 34 or 36% of annual growth – makes only 0.1% now; the crisis has affected us all. In this situation the processes are ongoing in Georgia, which cause ironic smiles… new cities are being built, some strange buildings, monuments… nevertheless it helps to provide jobs for people, some resources, investments are being attracted, and I believe some positive moments are also visible along with the ironic smiles. In this respect we are able to say that the current government has reached certain success in the economic sphere.

As far as the social sphere is concerned, we have a certain progress there too, even though the increase of the gap between the rich and the poor, could hardly be characterized as a very positive process. There is one complicated factor: unfortunately the social statistics available in Georgia are not very reliable. The representatives of international organizations are well aware of how difficult it is to get reliable information about such things as poverty, because we are no longer measuring absolute poverty; currently the poverty level has decreased twice overnight, in 2004 or in 2005, as a result of changing the methodology, and in general it is difficult to reliably confirm these kinds of things – but still, some processes are taking place, there is a social policy, there are changes in social and economic spheres.

In the purely political area the situation, to my opinion, is less optimistic (though it is true that the above described situation could hardly be characterized as exactly optimistic). What do we have in the field of the positive? We can list as positive events some strengthening of the state, because the main focus was exactly to strengthen it; but strengthening of the state is in a way a double-edged sword: strengthening means centralization of the power, a practically abolished lower level of self-governance, we have only one self-governance level left – the district one. We have a regional power of the appointed governors, which also does not contribute to democratic development; and unfortunately within all these years we have a complete dominance of one political force which is always bad for the authority, for the country,
and of course, for democracy. And the authority with some of its positive sides, such as readiness for radical reforms, for dynamism, and I would add, for populism, although sometimes excessive – has two most negative points: first its unwillingness to consult with the society – the decisions are often made instantly, and sometimes these decisions prove tragic; and the second one is the weakening of the judiciary; starting from 2004 this process has virtually no place to advance, the judiciary became the tool of the executive.

Now, what are the prospects? Like I said, there is uncertainty and hopes for some people, linked to the parliamentary elections in the end of the year – whether in October or not, we will see - and the presidential elections next year. We are facing a new, unexpected situation (I will speak in general, I think you are following the events) – we have a changed disposition of powers at the expense of the newly appeared political figure, personified (as is usually the case in Caucasus) – you all know it, in a wealthy man Bidzina Ivanishvili, who for some reason or other, managed to unite around him quite a considerable segment of political opposition, which till now was unable to either unite or present a more or less constructive program to the society, and was more oriented towards criticizing the acting power, which is not always enough for serious victories or at least participation...

What does this mean from the point of view of the balance of powers? First come the parliamentary elections. I will briefly describe the scenarios, because different scenarios will differently influence the further distribution of political power; but a few more words about the changes that have taken place in our country. The most important change is a transition from a strictly presidential system of authority to a mixed one: it may be said, to a presidential and parliamentary system, which is also quite peculiar. It will come into force after the presidential elections, that is, after the inauguration. It is interesting to note that it is almost the first phenomenon of the sort on the post-Soviet space; I have to say that in many aspects Georgia sometimes comes in the forefront of some changes, be it a “botanic” revolution or other processes, though often these processes assume formal or comic appearances. Nevertheless in Russia, for instance, you know, a discussion is ongoing as to what it was that helped Georgia to achieve success, and though we, inside the country, are quite critical about many actions, from outside very often they are viewed very positively; in Baku, for example, some opposition leaders say: “You shouldn’t be complaining, we wish we had a situation like yours!”

So, constitutional changes make one important point. The other important point is the abolition of local self-governance, which is a great blow for the long-term political development of the country, because local self-governance is very important for the development of a political culture and democracy. And the third point – currently we have the following strange process going on: on the one hand there is a change of the legislation on political parties, on financing the political party (a very essential point), and even, a bit comical again, now they are changing the constitution, the legislation, in order to let the opposition figure, Ivanishvili, take part in the elections, i.e. they are changing the constitution for one person. But I have to say that some of the comic things that are taking place in Georgia are sometimes encouraged by western organizations (a small excursus: I remember in 2004, when the first constitutional changes took place, an EC representative on Caucasus Mr.Talvittie said: “Well, what do you expect, you have a young president, and the constitution has to reflect this fact”, - a very interesting point, i.e. it is not only in Georgia that they think so, however funny it may be).

Now we have a certain political struggle – not on equal terms, of course, because the administrative resource is very serious. The authorities were extremely scared in the beginning by the appearance of such a serious alternative, but there is a second very important point besides the fear: both in South Ossetia and in Georgia proper there is a certain limitation of political maneuvers due to the fact that Tskhinval is oriented towards Moscow, and as for Georgia, it is oriented towards the West. That is, we are not Belorussia, which can change its patron from time to time. Unfortunately, as we saw, Moscow’s pressure is not always aimed at democratic processes. But the western pressure, in principle, is in general aimed at more democratization of the regime; and when Ivanishvili was refused Georgian citizenship (I will not...
go into detail, if there are questions I will try to answer them), there was quite a considerable
pressure on the Georgian government, and these changes in the legislation, in the constitution,
which will allow him to take part, they are absurd, but it is a result of the pressure in the
direction of a bigger political pluralism.

Now perhaps it makes sense to move to questions and answers.

Tskhovrebova Lira: You mentioned changes in the constitution. I thought these changes
were taking place in order not to let Bidzina Ivanishvili to take part in the presidential elections.
So, what were they caused by?

G.T.-M.: “Honey is sweet but the bee stings”. The main thing is not to let Bidzina
Ivanishvili win the elections – that is clear. But at the same time, like I said, it is difficult to
openly speak antidemocratically. And when Ivanishvili was refused citizenship there were a lot
of protests at the international level, so the latest changes are just aimed at an attempt to
somehow compensate this. It is not a full-fledged compensation, because it is not so much the
problem of personal participation, as much as it is a problem of financing the party activities,
which is not so easy for the foreigner to do. They passed the law in the first reading, allowing
him to run for elections, but it is very interesting as to how the initial text was changed: at first
people were allowed to run for election who are citizens of one of the countries of the European
community and have lived in Georgia for ten years, but now they changed it and made the last
ten years; the thing is that it is an arguable questions if Ivanishvili lived in Georgia for the last
ten years or not, they say he came in 2004. That is, the authorities are making certain
compromises, but at the same time they are providing details to prevent him from participation.
Weather it will work or not depends on international pressure on the internal political situation;
now quite an active cooperation with the civil society is going on, which helped, for example, to
establish the organization “It concerns us all”, there are some changes at the level of the law on
political parties, i.e. civil society is working to find mutually accepted solutions. At any rate we
have a situation where the ruling political party is seriously competing with a coalition of the
opposition parties, which is lead by Ivanishvili. When he first appeared, he was accepted by
many people as a new Messiah; unfortunately this kind of messianism is present in the post-
Soviet space (you have mentioned about 98% support). But it is not accepted like that by
everyone – that is the first point, and secondly, Ivanishvili himself, with all his great experience
of commercial activities, still doesn’t have enough experience in political activity, he makes
mistakes, therefore it is still an open question as to weather he will eventually be able to provide
a serious competition. And in general our opposition forces – with all my respect to the
representatives of the Georgian political parties if some of them are present here – have no
constructive, alternative program of future vision, which is quite unfortunate. Just like Kosta
Dzugaev said before, political orientation towards individual leaders. At the same time, all
political forces in our country are oriented westward, with the exception of two or three parties,
which lost their authority. All of them are oriented towards integration, towards free market,
towards NATO. At a certain point it is no longer so definite, but we will see…

Sociological data does not provide definite assessments. Semi-official data looks as
follows: 47% are still supporting the ruling party, and about 12% are currently supporting
Ivanishvili. I do not know how reliable this data is, and honestly, I doubt it is too reliable,
because there is a great number of individuals who refused to answer, which is always
suspicious. Recently the International Republican Institute also held a survey, but the findings
are not publicized… though, all this is not so important, the main thing is that the changes are
taking place. If no big mistakes are made, we will face a new situation: there will be no
constitutional majority of one political power in the new parliament for the first time within the
last several years. I think it a very important achievement, which gives grounds for optimism,
even though not a 100%; but it is very important that it won’t be possible to change the
constitution every two or three months in one way or the other. It is important from the point of view of limitation of the “kind of lawmaking”, and in the second place, the parliament can become a serious platform for discussion of political or other issues, if there is a serious opposition presented there, which becomes possible now.

There are two or three scenarios here. The first one is that the ruling party loses; but honestly speaking, I think there are very little chances for that. Though, if the government makes serious mistakes (and unfortunately we were able to see that sometimes they make such mistakes), - and the opposition wins, that this will drastically change the political situation in the whole of Georgia: a strange period is being formed before the presidential elections, because our constitutional changes are coming into force (the main part) after the presidential elections; to have a president and parliament, which is in oppositions to him – and with the president having a great power – means that a very serious political crisis is a possibility, and we do not know how it will be solved. The second possibility, as I said, which is more possible in my opinion, is that the ruling group will preserve the majority, but there will be a serious opposition in the parliament, and the political struggle will become more active. And the third possibility is that again the constitutional majority will remain the ruling power – I think it is very unlikely in the given layout. Why it so? First of all – who is supporting the opposition: mainly it is the urban population, and mainly in Tbilisi, which is approximately one third of the country’s population; while the ruling power is supported by national minorities, especially those compactly settled – like Armenians of Samtske-Dzhavakheti, Azerbajianis, and mainly the rural population. That was the situation during the presidential elections in January of 2008, when the president in office greatly lost in Tbilisi, and failed to get more than half the votes in all the cities, and most probably this kind of geographical disposition will continue. But support from the minorities and the rural areas is very considerable, and if you add here an administrative resource, which is very serious, and it does not necessarily show only during the elections, and vote count, it works permanently through different ways, and when the judicial authority is weak – and it is weak – then it is very hard to argue with the illegal or close to illegal actions.

Therefore we will talk about the scenario where there is a balanced parliament with large representation of the ruling party; I think it is the most stable decision. And what next? After that there will obviously be a serious struggle for the presidency. And the situation is very strange: in order for somebody from Saakashvili’s surrounding to become a president, in the first place it is necessary that this person should already be well-known, that is he has to be promoted as soon as possible to make him popular – that is the first problem. Whereas now it is not the case, and when it is otherwise, and we remember the situation when Sheverdnadze left, when there was no natural heir, then usually the ruling power encounters serious problems; and the second points is that there are no people within the ruling group who could be compared with the ruling president by popularity, but on the other hand, in this case they will not pose a threat to him in the future. In this situation it is quite possible that the candidate of the ruling group will be a weak, symbolic figure, like the parliament Speaker – they are trying to create popularity for him, but he is not a charismatic person; or – and people think about it quite seriously – it will be some of the stronger figures, but then again a split is possible inside the ruling group; in general, it remains a serious problem as to who will run for presidency.

But there is a second serious problem – since the constitutional changes will have already come to force – as to who will be the Prime-minister after the presidential elections, and who will rule the country in reality? On one hand, this problem should be solved after the parliamentary elections, but it will once again be reviewed after the presidential elections; and the first question raised here is if Saakashvili will want and if he will be able to become a Prime-minister himself? In principle, if there weren’t so much external pressure, this kind of scenario would be quite possible, because sometimes we “adapt models” from Russia, in spite of mutual criticism – but there will be pressure, it is already in place, and of course the pressure may play its role. The second point of bifurcation is the presidential elections: who will become a president, and who will be forming the government. If Saakashvili remains in power, then the
government will be in crisis, and it will be a serious crisis, because first of all the support from the West will be considerably reduced, and secondly, great tensions will appear within the government. Everything is possible in this situation. It is even possible to admit a change of the external political orientation, as a hypothetical possibility, for if the western support were to be lost, than the Lukashenko variant is not completely excluded – which would mean an attempt to replay the external orientation; though I think that the Georgian society will not support anything like that and it will cause a great protest. The second risk is an artificial destabilization, because in the situation of destabilization the ruling group always has a chance to lead the changes; this is the greatest risk. And the third possible situation – that there will be a balanced government, there will be a comparatively acceptable neutral figure, because according to the constitution the president should not belong to any political party; it is also possible, in which case we will have at least some stable development, at least till the Olympics.

What does it mean? If we have a more balanced government, it will have more active communication with the society, better communication with the civil society, and there will be less spontaneous unexpected decisions – which has of course negative sides too, that is, some things will take time to be solved (like, for instance, a decision about the revoking of visas for Russian citizens, it may take even a year), but then the risks will be reduced and stability will become a possibility. Secondly, if it turns out (Kosta had mentioned it) Saakashvili, being a figure who is in principle not acceptable either in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, will move back, than we will have a chance to start some dialogue from scratch. And though there is little hope to achieve a breakthrough in the coming years, and in our situation it is not the political breakthrough which is important, but the establishment of some kind of mutual confidence, this is the only realistic hope; generally like it was before 2004 – there was no political breakthroughs, but there was communication at a lower level, there were some common economic interests. By the way, recently there was a statement about the Ergneti market, and though it was immediately cut short, because it was allegedly “wrongly understood”, - such projects will become possible. There will be no serious changes in the coming one-two years, but after that there at least will be a potential. Our goal as a civil society by the time some progress becomes possible is to provide at least some new ideas, some new level of mutual confidence, and that will become a platform to build upon.

I was mainly speaking about the internal situation, but we have very strong factors of external influence, which can change all this. The first is related to risks; the biggest risk (and here, I think, we have a different vision) – is the risk of new military actions from the Russian side, because it is not so important as to who is going to provoke what, or who is going to make the first shot, but it is a possibility, and let us not forget the military bases forty kilometers from Tbilisi. I don’t think about a full-scale serious war, but in principle some kind of mutual provocation is possible, it may be to the interests of all sides; by the way, unfortunately I am not so optimistic with regard to South Ossetia, because the fact that Putin came back to power can mean a lot, but most probably it will mean a new “tightening of the screws” and a more active interference on the internal affairs, and not its decrease, no matter what the civil society is saying about it. I think it would be interesting to compare it with the situation in Abkhazia, where personally Putin’s request to give into full ownership of Russia the key property, the sanatoriums of Beria, Stalin and others, with the principle of exterritoriality (a unique requirement), to move the borders to the south etc. – I think something like this will take place, maybe in a different way, but there will be pressure and strong control. The “Chelyabinsk” group has left, but it is not impossible that the “Vladivostok” one will arrive, they have changed their leadership… Well, it is difficult for me to judge here, we’ll wait and see. I think until 2014, until the Olympics, God will be our savior, but what happens after that, who knows.

The second risk, of course, is related – and it is a general problem – to the North Caucasus. It is not such a short-term problem, what will happen in the North Caucasus in the coming years we don’t know very well, but the processes that are going on there are quite
serious, and of course they will touch upon the Ossetians, both South and North, and Georgia as well.

These are the key external influence factors. Though we have Iran; whatever happens in Iran it is understood that Russia will become active in the region, as well as the West. Both will change the balance of forces, and again this unpredictability, - it is true, that unpredictability is not only linked to the internal political processes, but to the external political layout as well; again I repeat, the factor of Russia, the factor of Iran, and not only Iran, the situation is not very clear with Turkey as well, where the external political vector is aimed, though currently the situation is relatively stable there.

That was generally my opinion.

Manana Mebuke: I would like to add something from the gender equality point of view. Our initiative group has collected 32200 signatures, it is quite a lot, any political party could have envied it, we brought it to the parliament, and in the end of 2011 upon recommendation of the Venice commission the parliament made amendments to the law, which clearly reads that there should be no less than 20% of women in the lists of the political parties, and the funding of the political parties will be increased by 10%.

G.Tarkhan-Mouravi: I do not welcome quotas in general.

M.Mebuke: There will be other opinions, other issues in the parliament, and it will contribute to tolerance and stability.

Irina Gagloeva: Is there a quota for women in the Georgian parliament?

M.Mebuke: It is not a quota. In the lists of the political parties women should be present not in the end, but rather there should be a woman within every ten count.

L.Kozaeva (Tskhovrebova): Taking the advantage of me being a facilitator, let me ask my question. In line with the report subject I once put the same question to our much respected Archil Gegeshidze, and got the answer. I would like to ask you the same question and hear your opinion. For it really is of true interest and concern, personally for me. I fail to understand: what is the true goal of the Georgian leadership with regard to South Ossetia (I will say nothing of Abkhazia, they will deal with their problems by themselves), what does the Georgian leadership truly want? a) it got used to the idea, agreed with it, that South Ossetia is lost for them, and now they are just playing political games, in order to keep the people from protesting, or b) in any case [they are planning] to return South Ossetia through military actions, repeat the experience of 2008… or what? To reconcile, not to reconcile? What lies in the basis of Georgian leadership’s strategy and tactics with regard to South Ossetia?

G.Tarkhan-Mouravi: I can only imagine who is thinking what, I mean this is just my opinion about the opinion of the other, a second-hand opinion. As for the tactics: I do not see any, as well as I do not see any strategy, therefore it is difficult to talk about them. There is a certain system of values, or goals. The official goal is to restore the territorial integrity of the country; many of those in the leadership believe in it. The second point is as to what does the leadership’s opinion mean? The leadership is represented by a team, different team members may be of different opinions. It think one of Georgia’s problems is that real decisions are made by very narrow circle of people – just several people, who make the decisions: those are the president, Interior Minister, and two or three people more. The main goal is of course a patriotic one, but the second one, and actually the first one for some of them – is to keep the power. So it is not possible for those who yearn to maintain the power to speak about Ossetia being lost.
On the other hand, this question prompts me to talk about the future of Georgian-Ossetian relations, which I only touched upon in passing. I spoke earlier, what if the leadership changes, if other people come to power, other elite, other group of people, or if the current group maintains the power, but it will be balanced at the expense of the growth of political pluralism, strengthening of the opposition etc., and as a result there will be more balanced policy, - and the first thing which is going to happen most probably, there will be other president, which is already 99.9%. Secondly, the possibility of the current president not to become a prime-minister either, here my estimation is 70-60%, because there will be great pressure, though possibly he would like to become it. If it turns out to be the case, the change of personas in the power, then at least there will be a possibility to hold a dialogue between the Georgian and Ossetian societies, to achieve some goals. As for the conflict settlement, I think it is obvious that South Ossetia will not ask to be integrated to Georgia, and Georgia will not capture it, it is obvious that there are no visible solutions so far in either direction. I wouldn’t like to talk about the problems of South Ossetia, but it has two main problems: the first one is that if the relations with Tbilisi are not settle somehow, then there is no economic future for South Ossetia. It is not just my opinion: last year we made a small collection [of articles] with our Ossetian colleagues, and you could see that this opinion is shared by my Ossetian colleagues, economists. The second problem is even more serious, it is a demographic one. We know, that even though on Kokoev’s web-site it was said that there are 75000 people living in South Ossetia, the number of people decreases. I think it is bad for everybody – it is bad for Georgians, and it is bad for Ossetians. Why? Because active and educated people are those who leave; they leave for Vladikavkaz, Moscow and so on, leaving behind only those working at the Russian military bases, or in the state structures, or people armed with machine guns, who had seized part the of their properties. Maybe I am oversimplifying, but only the most radical people are left, those who are the least ready for any compromise. These are the two biggest risks, which are bad enough for everyone. If any kind of dialogue starts, if any kind of economic relations will be restored, so that people are able to have some alternative, and not only state-provided means for existence, I believe it will be of good, and in the nearest perspective it will be enough to help improve the relations, to facilitate communication and trade at a lower, human level… the way it used to be before 2004. This scenario is not altogether unrealistic.

L.Kozaeva (Tskhovrebova): All of these if possible under new leadership. Here is another question: could you tell me, please, currently Mr.Ivanishvili’s very often comes out with his program speeches – what is the role, or place of South Ossetia in those speeches? Let us assume that he came to power – what will be his actions towards South Ossetia?

G.Tarkhan-Mouravi: I think that today he has not clear idea of what to do with respect to South Ossetia. If he comes to power (though I don’t think the possibility is high), the first thing he undertakes will be to promote those people to certain positions, who had already displayed activity within his team in different spheres. Several people from team were dealing with the problems of conflict, one of them being Alasania. If Alasania will be dealing with these problems – he was mostly dealing with Abkhazia, and his position in this regard was quite moderate, a humane position with regard to the conflict, he was respectful to the Abkhazian position – and I think the same will be true with regard to South Ossetia, then it is quite a good perspective. Other people, from the Republican party, who were dealing with the conflicts – their influence will increase, such people as Ivlian Khaindrava, David Usupashvili, and undoubtedly Paata Zakareishvili – this is also quite a moderate position, but it is also quite realistic and constructive; still I don’t see any political solution in the nearest future. Planning ahead, figuring the long-term perspective, I am about 60% optimistic that some kind of a compromise will be found: and it is a different issue as to what kind of compromise it will be. I do not think that Ivanishvili will come to power like that. If he doesn’t come to power, there will be some other force, which will also be adhering to a relatively more moderate
position. Saakashvili will be at power no more, other figures will be there form among the ruling party. But those will be different figures, they will be less emotional, they will not be taking spontaneous and accentuated decisions; they will be considering the opinion of the opposition, because otherwise it is difficult to maintain power, and most probably they will be more reasonable (however let us not make complements in advance). This option is also not bad, if more constructive elements come to power the life will become better, more cheerful.

L.Kozaeva (Tskhovrebova): Well, if your optimism is related to the possibility of good neighborly, normal, kind relations, it gives us some hope as well – because let me assure you, that we, and me personally, do not feel safe from the possibility of August 2008 repeated. I am saying this absolutely sincerely, not just for the sake of saying something, but because we really feel this danger, the fear is there, and even the slightest movements from the Georgian side – I even was asking Paata when we spoke on skype, that there were hospitals, polyclinics, new wards being actively constructed, what was all that construction linked to – because we link it to the fear, that again some military actions may begin, though it is terrible to even say it aloud; but Paata keeps reassuring me that it is not serious. I just want to state, that this fear, the lack of the sense of safety is present in our society.

R.Kozaev: You mentioned that there was an economic growth in Georgia. Could you please specify – at what expense does it happen?

G.Tarkhan-Mouravi: the year 2008, along with many negative and even tragic processes and consequences, has brought surprisingly unexpected kind of positive element from the economic point of view: Georgia received a very considerable economic assistance. It is coming to an end soon, but it was something about 4,5 billion dollars, thanks to which it was comparatively easy for Georgia to go through the financial crisis. Hard to say how it will be going on further. Besides, there was a big problem with external debts, which were also quite considerable, but they managed to somehow restructure them, so the situation became somewhat easier in the coming years. To all appearances, the investments are taking place, it is not for nothing that they are building all those cities. Growth of domestic product is not the sole economic characteristic, of course, when I say 6,8% then this data might be not one hundred percent correct, may be it is 6,3 or 5,8 instead of 6,8% - the government tends to exaggerate the data by about one percent usually. But there definitely is a growth compared to Azerbaijan, where the growth used to be just huge, over 30%... The two most difficult positions for Georgia are agriculture, in the first place, which keeps occupied a little more than half the man power, and that with only 8% of the Gross Domestic Product produced, which is quite a tragic figure. And the second headache is industry. You know it very well in South Ossetia – it is practically dead, but we have some initial signs now that it reappears. There are investments in active construction, though this process with be slowing down, there is port economy, transport communications in general, you know, there was several hundred million dollars' worth US aid, there is still enough there, lax credits from Breton Woods organizations, there are direct commercial investments, lets say, Kazakhstan has invested quite a lot, especially into port economy… This is hardly a basis for a serious long-term growth, if the government's policy doesn't become more reasonable: today they are talking about agriculture, then all of a sudden they switch to tourism, then afterwards to something else. Unfortunately there is no long-term economic strategy just like there is no long-term strategy aimed at conflict settlement. The biggest problem for Georgia in the nearest future is not decrease of the GDP, but rather inflation. And not only general inflation at that, but especially the inflation caused by the increase of costs for food products, because poverty is still a very serious problem in Georgia. I am not sure how well I managed to answer your question, but the situation is not so optimistic, as the above figures show.
M. Salukvadze: I will add several points. Those are private investments, large farmhouses with investments from private entrepreneurs (very large ones); this is a large-scale privatization; transit of automobiles, export of nuts etc.

R. Kozaev: I would like to know if the production is improving in Georgia?

G. Tarkhan-Mouravi: Production is not the only tool to measure growth. 8% of the GDP belongs to agriculture…

R. Kozaev: What I mean is, in the past, when Ossetia was part of Georgia, Ossetia was providing itself bread, its own production, and besides was sending its cheese, meat and greens from Znaur and Leningor districts to Tbilisi. This was the case during the Soviet times. Now they are trying to revive agricultural production in Ossetia; why can they not arrange it in Georgia?

G. Tarkhan-Mouravi: The thing is that the product is being produced by the agricultural sector, but the costs are low. For example, even in Ossetia, they grow apples, cabbage – where do they take it? Do you know that in the adjoining regions they were throwing the cabbage away, because it made no sense to sell it for mere trifles. So that is the problem – the market. And secondly, the problem of infrastructure. Let's take honey. Currently honey is in great demand in Europe. But in order to be able to export honey you have to comply with very strict sanitary conditions: in Europe they don't take the honey which was kept in an aluminum ware. And so on…

P. Zakareishvili: Referring to what Lira had said, that the Ossetian society still lives in fear and expectation that Georgia can resume military actions – one has to try really hard to live in such fear, because in reality there are no reasons for such fear: there is not even 30% of the pre-August 2008 armament in Georgia now.

Remark: Isn't the build-up going on?

P. Zakareishvili: No way. Maybe that is what the Russian propaganda says, but even at the meeting of the highest level between Saakashvili and Obama it was clear, that the US did not even think of selling weapons to Georgia.

G. Tarkhan-Mouravi: Serious weapons.

P. Zakareishvili: Yes, I mean the weapons to start and maintain long-term military actions with. Support of Georgian army fell under sequestration in the US budget, several positions were removed due to the economic crisis, in order to balance the US budget; therefore those who support this kind of rhetoric are engaging in pure propaganda. Though the situation can change, and to that end we all had better pay attention. Anyway, besides expectation of the war, you have to build upon some other expectations, to see that something positive is going on in Georgia, and build the prospects of Georgian-Ossetian relations upon that. Personally for me, who was very worried and concerned, who would often express regret with regard to what had happened both in the direction of Abkhazia or South Ossetia, for me it is quite clear that we have to look forward, to find a way out from the deadlock. I was speaking about not very optimistic prospects for South Ossetia; I believe that South Ossetia by its geographic characteristic is turned towards Georgia. There is only a tunnel, currently under repair, towards Russia. There are no prospects in the nearest future that they will put through the second or the third tunnel, or a railway. Accordingly, what are the perspectives for South Ossetia? How it will be developing if the Georgian side is not open for South Ossetia, and if the South Osstian side is not open for
Georgia? If the trade is not restored? Many kinds of agricultural products were sold around the whole Georgia. It benefited not only the population of Georgia, but supported South Ossetia as well. It will be considerably easier for the Ossetian farmer if his produce is marketed in Tbilisi and in Gori, rather than exported to Russia. Water resources should be mentioned separately; unique irrigational systems of the region, which have long been out of order – the South Ossetian population can not use them, and neither can the Georgian side. That causes serious detriment of the agricultural infrastructure of the whole region, not only of South Ossetia. The prospect is that the population with either return to South Ossetia, or this territory will become completely depopulated, and like Gia mentioned, only those will stay who work at the military bases and for the officials. What the extreme Georgian nationalism failed to achieve – to expel the Ossetians from South Ossetia – something of the sort may happen now without these radical people. And as a result, the most talented, young people will become integrated into Russian reality through the educational system of the Russian system of privileges and quotas. The most intelligent young people are self-actualize in Russia, and not in South Ossetia. Therefore it is not worth dwelling on the possibility of war. This subject should not be the only subject for discussion. This can be discussed, but as the forth or fifth subject; there are other topics, more important ones: is it possible to economically develop the region; the possibility of opening the Ergneti market. Is Georgia able to move towards that currently? Recently Georgia has voiced that it is ready to renew gas supply to Akhalgori district. How acceptable it is for the Ossetian side, is it ready to let the water to flow to the Georgia villages in response? I think these kind of topics are mutually beneficial and important for the sides, let alone the politics. Let politics wait another 5-6 years. We will be able to go back to it afterwards.

G.Tarkhan-Mouravi: I will add a couple of words. In the same way some part of the Georgian elite keeps frightening us with Russia. Nothing is unexpected in the fact that the ruling part of the Ossetian elite is also using this subject. Today, when the Russian military bases are stationed on the territory of South Ossetia, it is impossible to admit the possibility of a military operation from the Georgian side. Different thing is that some provocations are possible, in principle, those of a small scale, and if there is a risk of destabilization, than it most probably means that there will be some actions from the Russian side, whatever the Georgian elites prefer to say – but it is hardly likely to happen before 2014, not before the Olympic games. I think that the possibility of it is not very high, but it is higher than the possibility of a mass attack of the Georgian army on South Ossetia.

L.Kozaeva (Tskhovrebova): Paata says this subject should be the 4-5th to discuss; I did not even presented it as a subject, but as an information on the state of affairs, however we might try not to talk about it.

I.Gagloeva: First of all, we are not under fear, why are you saying so?

L.Kozaeva (Tskhovrebova): How come there is no fear? Let us take Gassiev Dombai as an example, he was doing a repair, and the first thing he did he dug out a bomb-proof shelter. But in general, yes, of course there are problems to solve and move forward. From the Georgian side it is all closed, do you understand it. Even the simple rhetoric over TV. Do you know what is the matter? My mother was Georgian. All my childhood, my roots are in Georgia; maybe I my thinking differs from those who have nothing Georgian in origin – and all these is very important from me. When I listen to what they say on TV I have a subconscious wish to hear something respectful about my nation, something pleasant – but even the rhetoric, it is just terrible. I beg your pardon for being emotional, but this is my pet preeve. I always switch it off, I don't want to listen to that; I long for warmth, openness, proposals of friendship and love – but there is none of that, and that aggravates my fears. I beg your pardon.
M. Salukvadze: Referring to the subject of rhetoric and fear. Whether there is a military build-up going-on or not in Georgia, anyway it is much smaller in scale. I can not but confirm that the people living in the villages along the administrative border, and not only them, are looking with fear at the construction of military bases in South Ossetia, at the weapon tests, at the build-up of military potential, be it from Tskinvali or Sukhimi. So if we will be afraid of wolves we will not go to forest (nothing ventured nothing gained).

Why do we need these meetings at all? I absolutely agree with Paata, that these topics should be moved to point 10 of the agenda. Why there is no actual progress achieved at Geneva talks? Because the first point is the signing of the agreement on non-use of force, then all the rest. Well, let us admit this is politics. I am only expressing my personal opinion now. Let politics alone, but what about the NGOs? Here we keep talking in the same way the politicians, representing the sides, talk at Geneva discussions. We get to know each other, give information which is very easy to double verify, the territory is small, we can find out almost everything about each other. If the NGO start behaving as the officials, nothing will come out of it: it will be the process of lugging the grants, "meetings for the sake of the meetings". I might be mistaken, but I think that these meetings must be promoting the possibilities for the representatives of the civil society, media, to open to the people living on these territories, that it is not really dangerous, that there are people and structures, who want to do this and that. Or otherwise let us not be cunning.

L. Kozaeva (Tskhovrebova): I am very sorry if my small piece of information made such a pessimistic impression.

M. Salukvadze: Lira, it is not about you.

L. Kozaeva (Tskhovrebova): I am happy that we are able to speak up everything openly and frankly. We all have to know, including the Georgian side, that this point just exists – that is all. We move forward, I am not accentuating the attention of our dialogue on it – but it is there. As for our work, you know better than anybody how we work in this regard.
R.Kozaev: Regarding what has been said that we have to start off from this day. We agree with that. But what am I to do with my neighbor who lost two sons and doesn't want that? What am I to do with another neighbor who lost his daughter-in-law, small grandson and son-in-law in one car? My dear colleagues, can we really proceed from this day? Wait a minute, let me finish. You have to know, and we have to know, that this question exists, and we can not remove it. What prevents us from starting from a new page? And this is the question! If it were just once, we could have removed it. But it had happened repeatedly. Now let us consider this: we are non-governement organizations – what do we need to do to start from a new page? That is what we have to talk about. Let everyone put this question in front of him.

Z.Tskhovrebova: Really, the dialogue is moving in the direction, where I am afraid that the logic, in this case, will be prevailed by emotions, and it will be complicated. I would like to mention the point, raised both by Lira and Ira, concerning the safety and fears. It exists in our society not because we did not manage to recover, of because the pain was too much, but because actually the whole town of Tskhinval was a frontline within many years. Even in my apartment the traces of the shelling are not eliminated yet, letting alone the hearts of people. I was working for a long time with children, and I saw them running to hide to the cellars during a hailstorm, because they thought those were explosions instead of a hailstorm. And all these went on not for five or ten days, but unfortunately for twenty days permanently, and that made something in the psyche of the people change. As for the security issues raised by Lira, I think it should be included into the press-release in some form, because it is an important information, and if it will come from first hands, it will have a positive effect.

Besides, dear Gia has on several occasions mentioned the Olympic games, it seems to me it is a negative analogy, because we remember the Olympics of 2008, which at that time unfortunately did not stop the rulers.

I think, that it is also important to understand that the advancement, consolidation of Russia in South Ossetia is in the first place invited by the policy of Georgia, because it is exactly security that acts as the main factor to bring Russia to South Ossetia today, security and nothing else. Therefore I believe that the only way to confront it is to recognize our independence in the form in which it in reality exists for 20 years now, and that will become the factor to stop, as you say, the advancement of Russian army and their consolidation in South Ossetia. Thank you.

G.Tarkhan-Mouravi: These resentments exist from both sides. Do you remember the president of South Ossetia spoke about the destroyed, razed to the ground Georgian villages, thank God all this is published. It is true, many were killed, even the old people, you know, during the events of August 2008… The statistic is more of less known; what I mean is that all that is also part of today, I do not argue as who killed how many people, memory exists from both sides…

M.Mebuke: Let us get back to the discussion. A great deal in our relations depends on the policy Tskhinvali and Tbilisi will be leading. Nothing gets forgotten and nothing disappears. I can say this based on my own experience. When mister Ruslan spoke about those killed immediately I had before my eyes the sufferings my family had gone through. But it should not hamper our future work, because if we keep living just thinking of how we suffered, nothing good will come out of it – on the contrary, I think, that if I suffered, if my family suffered, I have to help along that other families never suffer in the same way and never undergo the drama of war that we had undergone.

As for the Georgian-Ossetian relations. True, there are resources, there are possibilities, and we have to use them in the concrete cases, in concrete projects. Water and gas. This is a very important and necessary subject. And we’ve been discussing this at several meetings already and it has already yielded results: it was during these meetings that the fears regarding Zonkar dam were raised, which could harm people. There are possibilities. The most important thing is that
the representatives of the civil society were working, that the society changed its opinion, its attitudes, and the main role in this process should be played by the media, they should be focusing on all the positive, the good experience still remaining in the society. Based on this, the political situation depends on the civil society. Politicians come to power from the civil society, they don’t just appear from nowhere. And when there is a positive emotion in the society, the one aimed at peace, at peaceful processes, then the opinions will be the same. Thank you.

P.Zakareishvili: Georgian-Ossetian relations are built in such a way, that South Ossetia does not gain from self-isolation, though unfortunately the current Georgian leadership helps in this much. Miss Zalina said that Georgia should recognize the independence of South Ossetia. A state is not a humanitarian organization. Why should Georgia recognize the independence of South Ossetia? What will it gain by that? They don’t discuss in South Ossetia (as well as in Abkhazia), what concessions is South Ossetia ready to make in case of recognition of its independence by Georgia. For example, in exchange for recognizing your state’s independence Russia has deployed military bases on the territory of South Ossetia; there is Russian ruble; Russian economy… That is, you are paying something for your independence; you like it, naturally, if I am buying something, I have to be content with what I have paid for. The situation is the same here: why would Georgia recognize South Ossetia, it is not discussed in your society! For instance, will the Russian military bases be withdrawn from the territory of South Ossetia? Will the displaced people be able to return to their homes? Is South Ossetia ready to give away some territory in exchange for recognition? Other question is whether Georgia will agree to accept such offers, but the Ossetian society itself, is it ready to compromise something in order to get what is so sacredly important for it? The same thing happens in Abkhazia: is it ready to give Gali region or Kodori gorge to Georgia? Is it ready to return the displaced people back throughout all territory of Abkhazia? Are they ready to take out the Russian troops? No they are not! So why should Georgia recognize state independence?

I am not reproaching you, but nothing moves further than these slogans, and we keep standing on the same spot. As a result, Georgia develops, and South Ossetia remains in some kind of enclave, and that worries me.

Chitadze Mikheil: Let us change the subject, or else we are moving nowhere. By the way, like in Manana’s case, my brother died in Abkhazia. I have suffered too. But that is other thing. That is not why we have gathered here.

L.Kozaeva (Tskhovrebova): I have a request to mister Gia: could you make a summary of the Georgian-Ossetian relations.

G.Tarkhan-Mouravi: In the first place, again, it is the past. I think it is very important that the mistakes are acknowledged from the both sides. If you let me, I will express my opinion, and then you make your comments. As for 2008, there is no doubt a mistake, a catastrophic mistake was made the Georgian government. However, from the subjective point of view, for ordinary people the only thing that is important is that people had died. And if we are somehow to solve this problem, I think there should be a mature state of the society, which should admit having done wrong things at that point. I think also, that a lot more wrongs were made by the Georgian side even back in 1991-1992, this should be acknowledged openly. I completely agree with Paata: recognition of South Ossetia is a political issue, and really, why it should be done? At the same time, recognitions of one’s own mistakes – that is necessary for the Georgian society itself, and I believe sooner of later it will be done, so far it is only done by different persons independently.

As for the perspective – in the positive vein I only see it in implementation of concrete things, economic cooperation, so that people in South Ossetia have means of existence in more that 3-4 spheres of activities, which I had already mentioned. What should the Georgian
government do to bring this about? First of all, it has to really provide the infrastructure, where such communication is possible; secondly, it has to simplify movement of the people, it is being blocked from the both sides, but at least from the Georgian side they have to make it easier for the ordinary people to cross over, to move freely, to make it possible to cooperate. And the third thing – and here I agree with Marina – the official position now is that there is no conflict between the Georgians and Ossetians, or Abkhazians, there is conflict between Georgia and Russia; it is an absolutely false position, because it means ignoring the reality of the ethnic component, which at some time in the past was much less, but which really exists today. And we have to proceed from this current reality, and as for the history – I am not saying we have to forget the history, it exists.

The next important thing is that the government should comprehend the strategy: what is that it wants in South Ossetia. Today as you know, there exists a strategy on the occupied territories, in principle, it is not a strategy in full sense of the word – it is some sort of a document, devised to make an impression of us as so very good and kind people. There is no serious strategy of actions with regard to South Ossetia or Abkhazia.

These are the minimal steps for the government to undertake, in order to bring about any improvements at least at the level of some kind of cooperation, confidence building.

It is true that the media plays a crucial role. I recollect mutually offensive things. I remember a wonderful journalist, a young girl, had printed an article saying how the Georgians rejoiced at children being killed in Beslan – I remember this article very well, I will not mention the author here. Here is how people make up such things. I think here we have both the roles of the civil society and the media… Unfortunately, that same man that drew my sympathies, David Sanakoev, whom I met at these meetings a year ago, made quite different statements when he returned back to Tskhinval… I understand, that he was in the government, that he was under pressure, but all these moments, of course they cause… And I will say nothing of the Georgian officials, I am much more sensitive to their being permanently oriented at impressing the western audience, their audience. All this is quite repulsive, but more than that, it is counter-productive, and I think our role is to promote some ideas, promote dialogue, and try to explain to those speaking publicly, that there is an alternative to constant exaggeration of mutual offences – and again, I repeat that I am not trying to level the responsibilities of the Georgian and Tskhinvali governments for the events of 2008, that is not what I am talking about, what I am talking about is the reality, and it is like I described it.

I.Gagloeva: There are not only the events of 2008, there are the events of whole twenty years. And by the way, maybe August in that sense is not the most terrible. Twenty years is a whole generation, which was forced to grow… there is a lot there. I agree, that it is necessary to forget…

G.Tarkhan-Mouravi: We shouldn’t forget.

I. Gagloeva: No, I mean to level, to draw conclusions. You have mentioned about the occupied territories. The Georgian government makes it “occupation” for the West, but you will hardly find anyone in Tskhinval to agree with the term; that is, you are working for the West. Whereas if there were cleverer people there, they would have thought of something else. I understand Georgia has its own political thesis, I am ready to understand the situation there; but Georgia doesn’t care for Ossetian people, neither do the rest, by the way – we are not specifically thinking about others. But at this moment there are more problems, one could focus on something else, but no, it is always something insulting. We are not an occupied territory, you can call us anything, it is your problem, but it speaks about your attitude towards us; this context will be present, there is a notion of time, whether it is an emotional category or anything else, but it is quite real, you can not ignore it, whatever the examples. In any case, South Ossetia did not attack anybody. If we are talking about searching for positive, and we are forced to search for it
because we live in such a geographic situation (I do not agree, that we will not survive economically without Georgia – yes we can survive, the other thing is how we will do that: if we worked better, if we had programs, then even in the current situation it would be possible to improve… but there are other problems, this set is quite complicated). And by the way, it is not only the problem of security that connects us with Russia, we have quite long-term historical relations, they will continue however friendly the relations are with Georgia, Russia will always remain in our context. We had historical relations with Georgian as well, this link will remain, you can not exclude one thing and start the other one. But it is not even that; respect starts from understanding, and that is exactly what we do not find in here. Naturally, one has to be a very harrow-minded person not to understand such geographic location – we are not talking about Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan etc. – we are talking about us, the neighbors, and those with certain political realities in the past at that. What to start with? Not with some hypothetic notions. Even the fact that we identify some deterrence here in this format is a good experience, it is a concrete work. We have to start with a dialogue, we talk, and all of us have to understand it. By the way, it was voiced here, that in the nearest future it will not be possible to speak about some specific political perspectives, there is a certain, concrete situation, and whatever good relations I might have with Marina or others, unfortunately it doesn’t spread on more serious problems.

R.Kozaev: I will start with the following: South Ossetia has never left Georgia – South Ossetia was expelled from Georgia. Recall the history and you will agree. It was driven out of Georgia. Am I wrong?

G.Tarkhan-Mouravi: Well, I don’t think you are right about expulsion, but you are right about wrong policy.

R.Kozaev: Well, what is the difference? Not one Ossetian would have left Georgia.

(Exited exchange of remarks among the participants from the Georgian and the Ossetian sides).

L.Kozaeva (Tskhovrebova): Please! Really, this is not a sweet-jelly meeting. Ruslan, wait a second, I deny you of the right to speak. Now this session is coming to an end. If somebody has some concrete offers, some ideas, you may speak up.

R.Kozaev: The only thing we have to do is prevent our governments to interfere with people, and then people will find what to do by themselves.

I.Gagloeva: We need time. The most important thing is that we can talk now, and further time will show.

R.Kozaev: My godson lives in Ergneti, I can not go and see him. My cousin lives in Gori, I haven’t heard anything of him for 20 years. That is all, I will say nothing more.

L.Kozaeva (Tskhovrebova): I have an idea… it is not an idea, it is stating of the fact. There is one general peace-building process, which is underway. Somebody wants it, somebody doesn’t want it, but it is there. There are projects, there is partnership, tomorrow we will talk about it, there is cooperation – and that is what moves the peace-building process forward, this is what brings us closer to the civilized solution of problems.

I would like to welcome a new member of our dialogue, Mister Craig Olifant, who has joined us, he represents an international organization.

End of the session.