

1. **Vision:** *As Georgia's president, what do you think will be your biggest objective?*

After five years, at the end of my presidency term, I see Georgia in the following way:

Georgia is a democratic country, where all human rights, including political, economic, social, cultural and ecological rights are protected. The country is holding a stable course of economic development. The unemployment problem has been solved. People work and strive for peace and improved welfare. The country is a reliable partner for the international community. Every aspect of the full-fledged public life is thriving: culture, science, media and etc. This is the country, where the civil society develops independently from the government though keeps it under constant control; where business interests are protected and all the conditions for the enterprise development are provided; where the government takes care of its citizens. The political environment is stable. Efficient steps are made towards the resolution of territorial problems and conflicts. The European course of development is irrevocable without any doubts within or outside of the country.

I will act with entire authority given to me by the constitution, will use all the means provided by the presidential institution, will make sure that the whole power of the highest political figure, elected by people, serves the people in return. This will be done together with my team-members, the coalition, Mr. Bidzina Ivanishvili and the citizens of our country in order to turn this vision into reality.

2. **Education:** *What is your vision on education policy? What kind of policy do you support for improving the quality of primary, secondary, professional and higher education?*

The education system must be linked to strategic objectives of our country. The government is responsible to arrange the education system according to interests of the country. The state itself is to become the main ordering customer for education and scientific research.

The autonomy and academic independence of universities have to be achieved throughout the entire Georgian academic sector and all appropriate legal guarantees and mechanisms have to be created for this purpose.

For the prosperity and full-fledged progress of the country, it is necessary to have professionals, specialists. The education and science have a decisive role in the long-term development of the country.

3. **Taxation:** *In your opinion, what kind of tax system is reasonable for Georgia and according to which principle should income tax be determined?*

Along with the development of economy, we might also think about improving our tax system; although, our current tax system is effective and provides favourable conditions for Georgian or foreign entrepreneurs and investors.

4. **Economy:** *What is your vision to accelerate economic growth? Which specific areas fall into your priorities and what kinds of policies would you propose to the parliament and the government of Georgia?*

Overall economic growth is the main objective of the country's strategy. Every citizen should be able to benefit from the positive results achieved, and the universal participation in this process of economic growth should be available for our population.

Our priorities are: formation of a stable environment, introduction of new technologies, attracting investments, expansion of markets, stimulation of Georgian production export, growth of manufacturing, energy and transit potential of the country, more intensive participation in international economic projects.

We have started and have to continue creating favourable conditions for business and entrepreneurship. In this direction, preferential loans and business-incubator programs are being developed.

The assistance to rural sector will to continue until the village gets back on its feet. In order to introduce urban lifestyle in rural areas, we are going to support the creation of public and cultural infrastructure that would make the rural life attractive and encourage population, especially young people to stay in villages. By creating quality living opportunities in rural areas, we are going to avoid migration and demographic problems.

In the contemporary world, economy cannot be based only on exhaustible resources; moreover, relevant knowledge is essential for better and efficient consumption of natural resources.

We must acknowledge that the major driving force of economic processes is human intellect rather than the exhaustible resources. That's why it is crucial to develop the human capital assets and reform the educational system.

Fully using the intellectual potential of each of us, we will turn Georgia into an attractive and interesting country, with strong economy.

Georgia will become a welfare state, based on traditional and European values, which always strives for development.

**5. Employment:** *What policies do you think the government should implement to address unemployment?*

The key to solving the unemployment issue lays in the economic development and creation of new jobs. However, this problem is not fully eradicated even in the most economically-developed countries. Step by step we should get to the experience of leading industrial countries, where the state takes social responsibility for aiding and retraining unemployed people. The government is bound to assist people in mastering new professions, specialities and find their own place on the labour market. This is a very important issue and it is going to be the subject of special care and attention under my administration.

**6. Health care:** *What kind of policies and concrete decisions would you support in order to increase access to and quality of health care?*

A type of system must be established, in which the interests of patients and doctors will be most important. The development of such system has already been started by adopting the universal health-care system.

The objectives of health-care policy are both further improvement of health insurance system and development of preventive medicine. For this purpose, it is planned to increase affordability in terms of costs and proximity of medical services; besides, the quality and quantity of service will be improved through better qualifications and technologies and through the construction of new out-patient clinics and hospitals.

**7. Social security:** *What policy do you support regarding the improvement of social security net?*

The new economic policy is aimed at the creation of opportunities to boost income. Besides, until our economy is strong, the government takes responsibility to provide the targeted social assistance to the destitute people.

The volume of social assistance is going to further increase. The work on new methodologies and criteria will be completed soon. The new social policy will be focused on better social justice – more attention will be drawn to families with many children, the sick, the retired and the disabled.

**8. Local self-governance:** *In your opinion, how the local self-governance should be organized in Georgia?*

The local self-government is the key mechanism for citizens participation in public administration. The objective of the self-government reform is the decentralization of the over-centralized system formed during the authoritarian regime, formation of an effective system of governing.

The local self-government must be based on the principle of subsidiarity. That means, that decisions must be made locally by those, who appreciate the problem most of all, who feels it most of all and knows the situation the best. Local authorities must be autonomous from the central administration and be accountable to the local population. This type of local self-government is going to be the outset of civil participation and new traditions of democratic involvement.

**9. Territorial integrity:** *What kind of policy would you support to restore territorial integrity and build trust amongst people?*

The non-violent resolution of conflicts is the irreversible course of Georgia that emanates from pursuing the non-recognition policy and the process of de-occupation of the country.

It is our priority to encourage direct relationship with our Abkhaz and Ossetian brothers, restoring the trust and affinity between the people, divided by occupational lines.

To our countrymen, living in Abkhazian and Ossetian regions, we offer to mutually build a successful European country, to live in independent, peaceful and democratic state, which will become the guarantor of each citizen's welfare, preserving their ethnic, religious and cultural identity and immunity of their political rights.

For Georgia, the restoration of its territorial integrity and de-occupation of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions is of utmost importance. Special focus is made on successful negotiations in Geneva, the increased involvement of EU Monitoring Mission and international organisations, and the enhanced coordination with our strategic partners.

We all recognize the role of Russia in all this. We are doing everything to restore the economic, trade, cultural relations and the atmosphere of trust with them. But at the same time, there will be no

sacrifice to our principles - there will be no compromise that will cast a shadow on freedom, independence, and honour of our country.

This complex effort has to help the unconditional, peaceful, and respectable return of displaced and refugees, to obtain solid guarantees of protection of their rights and realization of their freedoms.

**10. Sexual minority rights:** *What do you think on protection of sexual minority rights and their better integration in socio-political life?*

The objective of a democratic state is to protect the rights of every citizen. The protection of minority rights should be specially emphasised. The modern democracy consists in balancing rule by majority with the protection of minority. It takes a lot of attention and efforts to ensure that decisions made by majority do not restrict the minority rights.

The government should never allow any discrimination, persecution or oppression of humans on any grounds. At the same time, it must create conditions for full and creative self-expression of every human being.

**11. Women's participation in political life:** *Please, describe your position (if any) on increasing women's participation in political life.*

In Georgia women's participation in politics is substantially lower compared to the average European rate. Before the last elections, women made only 6% of the Parliament, which was the lowest index throughout the OSCE member countries. The situation has been moderately improved after the 2012 parliamentary elections, although the women representation in legislative as well as local self-governance and executive sectors remains nominal.

Women make the half of the population. Therefore, democratic justice demands that their participation during decision-making is adequate. We can't talk about real democracy if the half of the population is represented by 5, 10, 15% of the Parliament.

In this regard, Georgia can learn a lot from international experience. First of all, this issue needs to be included in the public and political agenda. The political will of the ruling party and of the political elite in general is crucial for this purpose.

Working with the society is of great importance. We have to overcome stereotypical views about women's role and, based on social consensus, we should create a society, in which every woman will have an opportunity of self-realization. Women should be engaged in the decision-making, they

should be in the field of power. Women's role in transforming Georgia into a democratic, human-rights-based society is priceless.

**12. Ethnic minority rights:** *Which policies would you carry out/support to ascertain a fuller participation and integration of ethnic minorities in Georgia's socio-political life?*

Our country's ethnic, cultural and religious diversity is our biggest wealth; it is a fertile soil for formation of a diverse socio-cultural space, for the interaction and understanding among people.

We will pay special attention to the complete protection of the rights of ethnic minorities. In addition, we will not only protect them from any sort of discrimination, but also create conditions for their full-scale development. It is especially important that they are fully integrated in state and public affairs. This is why we pay special attention to improving the quality of Georgian language tuition.

**13. Environment protection/ecology:** *Please, present your policy proposals (if any) aiming at creating a healthy and safe environment.*

The long-term vision of development denies utilitarian usage of resources, oriented on momentary gain. Treating the nature like consumers causes the derangement of human habitat. This is exactly the reason why nowadays we are facing unprecedented ecological challenges. The strategy of sustainable development protects economical, social and ecological balance. We have to keep pace with modern standards and say no to single-resource policies, whenever possible. We have to find alternative sources of energy and other resources. Besides, it is important to raise the ecological awareness of our society. The President can play an important role in this.

**14. Strategic partnership:** *With which county/or alliance of countries will you attempt to achieve a strategic, including military-strategic partnerships? What steps will you take in this regard?*

The main aim of the country's foreign policy is to protect Georgia's national interests, which implies strengthening the status of Georgia as a European, democratic and sovereign country at the international level. It is essential to become more active in foreign politics, in order to ensure integration with Euro-Atlantic structures.

Georgia is an inseparable part of Europe. European culture and values stand closest to Georgian national idea and identity. Our goal is that Georgia becomes a plenipotentiary member of Europe and contributes to the construction of the common European house.

Georgia also has a historic mission of becoming the place for collaboration, dialogues and consensus between Europe and Asia.

**15. Regional cooperation:** *What would be your foreign policy towards the South Caucasus and Black Sea regions?*

As a country of the Black Sea basin, Georgia is a part of geographic, political, cultural, economic, trade and security space of Europe.

EU borders the other side of the Black Sea. We need to start building a bridge towards that other shore. Georgia has to especially deepen the partnership with the countries of the region. By strengthening the political, economic, trade and cultural connections between the Black Sea and Caspian Sea regions, Georgia has to take the leader's position in terms of democratic development.

**16. Defense policy:** *How would you organize the defense system?*

Our government has already stated that it is planned to gradually transition to professional-military service. The Ministry of Defense is already working on this reform. I completely share such vision of the defense of the country and I believe that a well-trained professional army will be the reliable guarantee of security for our country.

**17. Security Policy:** *How do you see the fundamental principles/architecture of Georgian national security?*

Democratic and peaceful development of Georgia is a cornerstone of the national security of our country. It reduces external threats, ascertains the formation of the country as a reliable international partner.

The long-term warranty for Georgia's national security is to become a full-righted member of the free world, which is achieved through integration in EU and NATO.

The armed forces of Georgia remain as the main warranty of Georgia's security. Therefore, we must ensure that the professionalism and effectiveness of Georgian armed forces is constantly growing.

At the same time, we do understand that the peaceful world is the prerequisite for the advancement and economic growth of our country. By taking part in Peacekeeping Mission in Afghanistan, Georgia makes an important contribution to ensuring the international security. We will continue executing obligations, serving to fight against terrorism and other global threats and to consolidate modern global security.

In order to ensure economic and energy security, a sustainable system of energy security has to be created in Georgia, which will be based on diversification of power-supply, creation of the supplies and preservation and improvement of the infrastructure.

We have to ensure economic security by developing strategic branches, main infrastructure and by increasing the government responsibility over the objects of vital importance.

Creation of free economic environment, growth and diversification of foreign investments will help to deepen the partnership and will increase the number of countries, interested in the peaceful and safe development of Georgia.

**18. Abortion:** *In your opinion, should abortion be banned or not? Why?*

We have to handle this highly sensitive issue with utmost care. The experience of the countries, where abortion is illegal, shows, that prohibition of abortion does not result in decreased number of abortions, but on the contrary, increases the number of illegal abortions. This creates a threat to women's health, and often, to their lives. Prohibition of abortion may lead to especially grave consequences for poor and socially unprotected women.

The correct strategy against abortion is not its prohibition, but raising awareness of reproductive health and rights, as well as making family-planning services available. Any other approach will worsen the women's health status in Georgia, increase maternal mortality, deepen the gender inequality and drastically increase the number of cases of finding unwanted newborns on landfills. At the same time, the solution of this problem is strongly connected to the economic development, growth of social safety, increasing the education and civil consciousness.

We can only succeed in molding a harmonized and rights-oriented society, if every pregnancy is wanted and every woman's fundamental right is protected. Reaching this condition, of course, is not easy, but the responsible government's goal cannot be of different nature.

**19. Taxation and credit:** *Should commercial banks be able to confiscate real estate (dwelling) property if the person is unable to repay the credit? Why?*

Banks, just as any other business, should be free, including when determining the credit policy. Although, the government cannot avoid its responsibility towards its citizens. It must ensure that the rules are clear and understandable for everyone, and that the citizens are protected.

**20. Agricultural land:** *Shall foreign citizens be allowed or not to purchase agricultural land in Georgia?*

Nowadays, the land is a resource of special importance. Global challenges of the planet and the annual decrease in agricultural land volumes make our soil resources even more valuable and care-worthy. When we talk about the land, we should consider not just some section of a certain area, but a resource, that needed hundreds of years to form as a fertile soil. Therefore, on one hand, the land is a matter of state importance. On the other hand, we have to consider the special relationship, which farmers have towards the land – for them the land is not just a means for income. Their identity is connected to the land, to the place where their ancestors lived, to the past. They are cultivating the land and perceive themselves in relation towards the land. The government has to support such people and give them an opportunity to keep living in their villages, pursue their favorite activity, but at the same time ensure that their life is full and interesting – not exhausting and futile labor, when they cannot sell what they have worked so hard to harvest. This is what the state is responsible to support.

Regarding selling the lands to foreigners, the problem is not the nationality of the person, buying the land, but how he takes care of this public resource and how he uses it. Does he/she benefit the local population? If we are dealing with cutting down big areas of woods and eroding the soils, it is of no importance, whether it was a Georgian who did it, or a foreigner. The politics of the previous government made living in the village unbearable for farmers and those had to sell their lands to foreigners since they could not benefit from land-ownership themselves. What we need is not to prohibit selling the lands to foreigners, but give alternative choices to farmers.