GEORGIA'S INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS ASSESSMENT PROGRAMME

PROGRAMME BACKGROUND

As Georgia makes significant strides in establishing political, economic, and social ties with Europe, partnership programmes are being explored with both the European Union and NATO. In June 2004, Georgia, along with Armenia and Azerbaijan, were included in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Though participation in the ENP does not constitute a path to EU membership, it does offer "the possibility to participate progressively in key aspects of EU policies and programmes, such as education, training and youth, research, environment, as well as culture and audio-visual policy. It can offer benefits in terms of economic and social development, and opens the possibility for a stake in the EU's internal market and integration into other key EU policies."

In March 2005, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, urged the Council of Ministers to begin formulating an action plan establishing targets for ENP and Georgian cooperation.

According to the Action Plan, Georgia must fulfil obligations in the following four spheres:

1) Co-operation in the field of rule of law, good governance, and democratic institutions;
2) Co-operation on foreign and security policy and conflict resolution;
3) Co-operation on reforms and economic development issues; and,
4) Regional cooperation.

On 21 November 2002, Georgia officially announced its desire for NATO membership, automatically involving Georgia in the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) process. The IPAP strives to ensure appropriate cooperation with NATO in encouraging and sustaining the domestic and external environment conducive to democratic reforms. Among the partners Georgia was the first country who could submit the required documentation (May 2004) and on 29 October 2004 the North-Atlantic Council approved the first IPAP for Georgia. If the IPAP is successful, Georgia will have good possibility to accede to the Membership Action Plan (MAP).

In addition to ENP and IPAP, Georgia has also committed to financing strategic state priorities and increasing public information on state spending through the establishment of Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) planning process supported by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. MTEF's objectives are to balance the national policy priorities with what is affordable, and link policy-making and planning to budgeting. It entails multi-year projections of what is affordable, what has to be financed with a focus on programmes of performance, institutional decision-making aimed at making the necessary trade-offs, and increased transparency of the budgetary process as a whole. The MTEF process is intimately linked with the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Program (EDPRP) and, because MTEF links policy and budgetary planning, is of great importance to the direction of the Georgian state.

And finally, there are several other documents that guide the Georgian government's actions, for example the G8 - Georgia Partnership Agreement, the Millennium Challenge Compact, and

although not a formal commitment, certainly the proposal to the donors made in Brussels in the summer of 2004 is a comprehensive list of plans set forth by the Georgian government.

Although the current government of Georgia has consistently stressed the importance of promoting democratic reforms since it came to power in November 2003, it has not been as successful in meeting the demands of the reform process or in making its efforts explicit to the public. Reform, when initiated, is done so in an entirely ad-hoc manner and at the level of individual sectors, ignoring the importance of comprehensive and inclusive reform strategies. As a result, reform occurs in isolation and with little input or oversight from the public or from experts who can accurately assess the work being done. In general, there has been a lack of information generated or circulated on the work of individual sectors, conflicting and inconsistent accounts of what changes are being made, and a general lack of understanding within the ministries themselves of what should be their medium- and long-term reform strategies.

As the current administration attempts to build the institutions that compose an effective and sustainable democracy, it is overlooking the necessity of developing a consistent and long-term reform strategy and in providing this information to the public. It is in this capacity that TI Georgia proposes Georgia's International Commitments' Assessment Programme that will seek to address the two most pressing difficulties currently affecting the reform process, namely:

a) lack of information on implemented changes; and
b) lack of continuous assessment that will create a "big-picture model" of implemented changes.

To date, there have been and continue to be many commitments made by the Georgian state, however, the monitoring of those commitments has often been modest in comparison with the efforts put into creating the original framework. Many of these documents and accompanying literature exist only in English and not in Georgian. Working together with relevant state entities and the non-governmental sector in Georgia it would be possible to vastly increase the amount of analysis available in Georgian and English on Georgia's international commitments with a focus particularly on how well they all fit with the ENP Action Plan.

With the end of the Shevardnadze government, funding for NGOs has fallen sharply as many NGO leaders have moved into government positions. Due to the large number of commitments made, there are few non-state actors (Georgian or international) with the ability to comment in a comprehensive and impartial way.

PROGRAMME OBJECTIVE

Transparency International Georgia proposes to follow and assess the ENP Action Plan formulation and implementation, and the correspondence of Georgia's actions with the commitments incorporated into other international documents. This information and assessment will be available and promulgated in both English and Georgian.

APPROACH

Georgia's International Commitments' Assessment Programme strives to provide an independent assessment of the implementation of ENP, IPAP, and MTEF requirements by the Government of Georgia. TI Georgia will hire four full-time analysts who will each focus on one

sector outlined in the ENP Action Plan: (1) Rule of law—judiciary, law enforcement institutions, and criminal justice; (2) Human rights and fundamental freedoms; (3) Business climate and economic development; and (4) Security and conflict resolution. The analysts will address and seek to rectify the two most pressing problems in the current reform process, namely lack of information to the public, and lack of continuous progress assessment. The experts will:

(1) Provide independent assessment of the developments in the fields covered under the selected document; and
(2) Distribute this information to the general public in a clear and cohesive manner.

The analysts will be based at TI Georgia's office and will travel between the government (both the Parliamentary committees that cover their sector as well the relevant ministries) and the population, in both Tbilisi and in the regions.

The analysis will comprise the following elements:

1) Desk Research: analysing Georgia's reporting on progress in the related fields,
2) Investigation: investigating specific instances of compliance with original commitments and remaining areas of concern,
3) Reporting: bimonthly reports will be produced and disseminated to the European Commission, NATO, World Bank, IMF, Georgian Parliament, Georgian and international NGOs, and media outlets in order to develop understanding of the process within and outside Georgia. All reports will be public. These reports will analyse Georgia's compliance with the selected documents and the European integration process in general, assessing both short- and long-term goals.

TI Georgia's Assessment programme will utilise the European Union's, World Bank's, and NATO's own monitoring policies, taking into consideration improvements made based upon the original Georgia country reports produced by the respective institutions.

In order to utilise international expertise in this project, TI Georgia will solicit additional funds from outside donors. We intend to involve in this analysis a total of four international experts, who will assist TI Georgia in developing the assessment of Georgia's European integration process. Two international experts will come from Brussels, Belgium and another pair of experts will come from Helsinki, Finland and Tallinn, Estonia.

PROGRAMME COSTS

Budget: € 42,000 Euros to cover salaries of four analysts and administrative costs.

PROGRAMME DURATION

12 months beginning March 2006.

PROGRAMME RESULTS

By having a continuous process of reporting and analysing the activities of the government in the targeted areas, the programme will act as an early warning mechanism giving warning of corruption at one stage, and as a catalyst of continuous re-planning and revision of decisions and procedures on a later stage.

One of the most important results of the project will be a continuous and all-inclusive assessment of the problematic issues in the country. Though this assessment remains absent, it is fundamental for the real resolution of existing problems within the government. Detailed information on government activities in the targeted field will increase the public's demand for information, will provide incentive for the government actors to initiate reform, and will strengthen the basic platforms of democracy crucial for a well-functioning state that is held accountable to its citizens.

The European Union's decision to use benchmarks in the ENP Action Plan will allow relations between Georgia and the European Union to become more focused, setting clear goals. In order for this process to be effective, the European Union should have an access to a comprehensive, current, and unbiased analysis of Georgia's efforts in institution building in various spheres. This programme is designed to meet this challenge.