



Unity in Diversity

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INTRODUCTION

The Union Century 21 was founded on December 9, 1998, as non-political, not-for-profit, non-governmental organization. It was legally registered by Saburtalo District Court of Tbilisi. The office of the Union Century 21 is based in Tbilisi, Georgia.

We carry out our activities within the scope of various programs, projects and initiatives focused on the freedom of religion, the different aspects of relationship between state and religious associations and interreligious dialogue.

In recent years, special attention has been paid to the mobilization of the potential of religious associations to involve them into the process of Georgia' integration into western structures and to cooperate with these associations to solve a number of challenges and problems.

Interreligious Dialogue

Since 2011, the Union Century 21 has been organizing the work of the Interreligious Working Group (Council). This group for the first time gathered the major religious organizations of Georgia, including the Georgian Orthodox Church. This is the first precedent of a fully-fledged interreligious dialogue in Georgia. The Council is committed to accomplish the following missions:

1. Discussing issues of common interest of religious organizations; and planning/implementing collaborative events.
2. Discussing issues of common interest of two or more religious organizations in order to find joint solutions.
3. Ensuring communication and enhancement of cooperation between religious organizations and relevant governmental agencies.
4. Mobilizing the potential of religious communities for Georgia's integration into western structures.



Meeting of the Interreligious Group with Catholicos Patriarch of All Georgia, Ilia the Second.

Currently the Council consists of the following religious organizations:

- Georgian Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church
- Administration of All Muslims of Georgia
- Armenian Holy Apostolic Church
- Roman Catholic Church
- Yezidism in Georgia
- Evangelical-Baptist Church of Georgia
- Pentecostal Church of Georgia
- Jewish Community in Georgia
- Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Georgia

Relationship between State and Religious Associations

Legal status of religious associations, the problem of restitution, property and financial issues, religion in public space, etc. are the issues on which the Union Century 21 works. There are significant problems in this regard and they should be resolved in compliance with international law and the best western practices.

The Western Way

The past years was filled with the significant events of Georgia's integration in the European space. The EU member states ratified the Association Agreement with Georgia, and Georgian citizens were granted a visa free travel within the EU countries.

The Association Agreement and the process of European integration obligates Georgia to conduct legislative and structural reforms, and the execution process of the latter, due to different reasons, may face significant challenges. In its turn, the Union Century 21 works on religion-related issues to make its contribution to the improvement of democracy and respectively support the country's integration into the EU.

The majority of Georgia's population is the follower of the Orthodox Church. According to many sociological polls, the Georgian Orthodox Church is the most trusted institution and the leader of this institution is the most reputable and authoritative person in the country. Taking into consideration the above factors, the position of the Georgian Orthodox Church, as well as the attitudes and viewpoints of particular authoritative clergymen is paramount in the context of European integration.

The main problem is the lack of information about a religious factor in the EU member countries, in general, and about separate aspects of church-state relations, in particular. This gap is traditionally filled with stereotypes or incorrect interpretation of facts and events.

The Union Century 21 was a pioneer in this regard. Through cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and within the scope of the projects supported by this foundation, representatives of the Georgian Orthodox Church for the first time were provided with comprehensive information on international /regional standards of the freedom of religion and state-church relationship models used in the EU member states.

The goal of the Union Century 21 is to deal with these sensitive issues in accordance with the European standards, in compliance with Georgia's Association Agreement with the EU and other obligations, and to organize discussions with clergy and legislative and executive authorities, in participation of civil organizations and other interested parties.

Activities

International two-day conference – “Religion, Legislation and Tolerance in Georgia: International Standards and Local Needs”.

The conference was organized by the Union Century 21 with the support of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief, International Center for Law and Religious Studies of Brigham Young University.

The members of a Council of Experts, well-known representatives of various universities of the world, such as Jeremy Gan, Koll Durham, Havier Martin Toron, Dag Nigaard and others participated in the conference. The representatives of state institutions, non-governmental sector, diplomatic corps and international organizations also took part in it.



Both the members of the Georgian Orthodox Church and the religious minorities of Georgia were represented at this event and this was one of the important achievements of the conference.

On the second day, the Committee of the Legal Issues of the Parliament of Georgia hosted the participants. During two days, the status, religious unions' registration and funding, interreligious dialogue, teaching religion and other important topics were discussed.



Visit of Georgia's Religious Leaders to Norway

The Union Century 21 organized the visit of the leaders of the Georgian Orthodox Church, the Jewish Community, the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Muslim Community, the Evangelic-Baptist Church, the Evangelic Lutheran Church, and the Pentecostal Church to Norway. During this visit, the leaders of religious unions met the representatives of Norwegian authorities, got acquainted with the Norwegian model of the relationship between state and church. The project was supported by the Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

Interreligious Dialogue – Golden Rule for Religious Associations

In 2006 - 2008, the Union Century 21 conducted a number of meetings in the format of interreligious dialogue between religious associations, which discussed the key principles of the relationship between religions. The project was supported by the Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

Status of Religious Unions in Georgia – Challenges and Perspectives

An international conference on the status and registration of religious unions was organized and a two-language booklet – “Status of Religious Organizations in Georgia” was published. The Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief supported the project.

Freedom of Religion and Belief – Support to Human Rights Culture and Democracy in Georgia

The project was implemented to support cooperation among various religious unions (members of the Interreligious Council) and to contribute to the resolution of the problems faced by them.

A joint commission composed of representatives of the Georgian Orthodox Church and the Evangelic-Lutheran Church was formed.

A joint commission in participation of representatives of the Patriarchate of Georgia, the Armenian Apostolic Church and relevant experts was also created at the Ministry of Culture of Georgia.

Several meetings between representatives of the Patriarchate of Georgia, the Catholic Church, the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Jewish Community and the Yazidi Community were conducted.

Four booklets were prepared/translated and published:

- OSCE 2004 recommendations for the analyses of legislation in the field of the freedom of religion and faith;
- OSCE 1999 analyses of the freedom of religion and faith: laws affecting the structure of religious unions;
- International legal acts in the field of human rights – Book I;
- International legal acts in the field of human rights – Book II.

All above activities were carried out with the support of the British Embassy in Georgia.

State and the Religion in the EU Member Countries

In Georgia, there is a lack of Georgian-language literature reflecting the models of relationship between state and church in the EU states and other related aspects. In view of the above, the Union Century 21 planned to prepare Georgian-language publication to fill this gap.

The organization translated and published a fundamental work – “State and Religion in the EU Member Countries” (Author Prof. Dr. Gerhard Robbers). The book reviews regulations related to the freedom of religion in all EU countries, issues dealing with a status of religious unions and their funding, religious education and other important topics.

This is the only fundamental work available in Georgian language, which covers the mentioned questions. The book was published with the support of the Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung Georgia and the German Federal Foreign Office & the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations.

Golden Middle in Case of Values Conflicts in the Realization of the Freedom of Religion and Expression -the Way to Democratic Society

Within the scope of the project, collection of legislative acts titled “Freedom of Religion and Expression” was prepared and published. The publication gathers Georgian legislative acts regulating the freedom of religion and expression. The publication also includes several precedential decisions taken by the supreme courts of Europe and the USA in case of a conflict between the freedom of faith and the freedom of expression, as well as the developments classified as intercultural conflicts caused by the collisions of the freedom of expression and belief.

Six meetings were organized in participation of clergy representing various religious unions, which were the members of the Interreligious Council. Representatives of media, legislative and executive authorities and public also attended these meetings. The project was supported by the Open Society Georgia Foundation.

Development of Democracy and Improvement of Tolerant Environment in Georgia – the Pass to the European Union

Taking into consideration the Eurointegration process, the Union Century 21 took decision to take actions aimed at increasing the awareness of the Orthodox clergy on values envisioned by the Association Agreement with the EU, as well as on the process of European integration, the models of the relationship between state and church in the EU countries, issues dealing with funding religious unions, the freedom of religion and expression, religion and bioethics, the international aspects of the freedom of belief, etc.

The organization held the 16 meetings with the clergy of the Georgian Orthodox Church. During of these meetings the above issues were discussed together with clergy, lawyers and invited experts. The project was implemented with the support of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Georgia.

Challenges on the Road of the Implementation of the Association Agreement and European Integration Process

The aim of the Project was to raise the awareness of the Georgian Orthodox Church, governmental structures and other interested persons with regard to those expedient issues of church-state relations in the EU member countries, to which Georgian society and religious unions were extremely sensitive. An active dialogue on such issues and support for overcoming existent challenges was provided within the scope of the project.

Georgia's Integration into the EU, Current Situation and Challenges Forum

1. Opening of the forum and greetings:

Mr. Sergo Vardosanidze, Rector of Saint Andrew the First Called Georgian University of the Patriarchate of Georgia.

2. Information about the project – the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Regional Office for the South Caucasus, Ms. Julia Blasius; the Union Century 21 Board Chairperson, Ms. Tamara Aleksidze.



3. Georgia and the European Union—the Office of the State Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, Mr. David Bakradze.

4. Delegation of the European Union to Georgia- Minister Counselor, Deputy Head of Delegation, Mr. Boris Iarochvitch.

5. Free speeches, discussion;

Moderator – Ms. Tea Gogotishvili, Doctor of Psychology, Professor at Saint Andrew the First Called Georgian University of the Patriarchate of Georgia.

Agenda



11:00- 11:05

Opening the meeting, greeting, introducing planned arrangements for attendees - Tea Gogotishvili, Representative of the Patriarchate of Georgia in Matters of Inter-religious Dialogue and Relations with International Organizations; IaTikanadze, Country Director, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Representative Office in Georgia.

11:05-11:35 Information on European integration process – speakers: Archil Karaulashvili, Deputy Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration; Helen Gotsadze, the NATO and the EU Information Center.

11:35-11:50 Questions of the speaker.

11:50-12:20 Models of state-church relations in the EU member countries – speaker: Paata Gachechiladze, the Union Century 21.

12:20-12: 35 Questions of the speaker.

12:35-14:00 Participants speeches; discussion.

14:00 Summarizing the meeting; dinner.

Brief overview of activities undertaken within the Interreligious Council

"Religion and Media" conference was held at Georgian University. This conference aimed to enhance communication between religious organizations and media, determine issues of common interest and stimulate dialogue. The decision was made to continue meetings for discussing issues such as "religion and the freedom of expression", "religion and media legislation", and for sharing international experience in this area.



Photo: Mr. Paata Gachechiladze is opening Norasheni Church to launch church rehabilitation. The Joint Commission of the Patriarchate of Georgia and the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Georgia.



The Union Century 21 was intensely engaged in the resolution of cultural heritage problems. For many years, the Georgian Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church had been requesting five churches located in Tbilisi, Georgia, the buildings of which were in critical conditions. While the issue of property owner ship remained unsolved, under the initiative of the organization, a joint commission was created at the Ministry of Culture of Georgia. The commission consisted of representatives of the Patriarchate of Georgia, the Armenian Apostolic Church and individual experts. The joint commission began working for the rehabilitation of these churches. Mr. Paata Gachechiladze represented the Union Century 21 in the aforesaid commission, who was tasked to supervise rehabilitation of the most important disputed monument, Norasheni.

GEL 2 million was allocated and the restoration process was completed. In addition to the work in the Commission, the Union Century 21 was also monitoring conditions at monuments located in northern

Armenia; the Georgian Orthodox Church requested restoration of its property rights on these churches.

A joint commission of the Patriarchate of Georgia and the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Georgia was also established. The activities of this commission were coordinated by the Union Century 21. The commission worked on the prospect of mutual exploitation of the 19th century churches located in the village of Asureti, Tetrtskaro rayon of Georgia and in the village of Trialeti, Tsalka rayon of Georgia. To resolve the problem, the meeting with the Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia took place, where H.E. Ortwin Hennig, Ambassador of Germany in Georgia was present. Several meetings took place between the representatives of the Patriarchate of Georgia, the Catholic Church and the Armenian Apostolic Church. The sides discussed important questions dealing with the relationship between these churches. In 2013, the Union Century 21 was coordinating the process of handing synagogues over to the Jewish Community. The issue was addressed in a report by the US State Department.

Meetings on the Basics of the Freedom of Religion and Human Rights Course of Lectures

A course on human rights and the freedom of religion was developed. Nine lecture-seminars on these topics were delivered to Mtskheta-Mtianeti clergymen. This was the first step when the Union Century 21 came to the clergy on this subject.

Challenges to the Implementation of the Association Agreement and Eurointegration Process Conference

29 November, 2016

Developments in the country are especially important for integration of Georgia into the European space. Enactment of the Association Agreement and visa liberalization were most significant steps in this context.

Of course, this process is not smooth and is characterized with certain difficulties. Intense propaganda by Russia to discredit European values, myths and stereotypes prevailing in society and attempts to weaken the influence of western-oriented forces on the political arena give rise to serious challenges for the country.

Taking into consideration the above factors, the Union Century 21, in collaboration with the Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung Georgia, had been implementing specific target-oriented actions during four years.

The joint purpose of these two organizations was to raise awareness of clergymen representing the Georgian Orthodox Church and other religious groups with regard to Eurointegration and provide them impartial and comprehensive information on important issues dealing with relationship between state and church in the EU countries.

Such actions were especially important in consideration of public opinion polls, according to which the Georgian Orthodox Church remained most trusted institution in the country and its leader was very influential person. Respectively, the attitudes of this institution and influential clergy to the ongoing processes were paramount.

The conference was to summarize the results of the work done. Presentation of two publications: "Freedom of Expression and Religion" and "Teaching Religion in Public Schools" was held. The freedom of expression and religion and teaching religion in public schools had been hotly debated within the different circles of public and the Union. Century 21 tried to bring these issues in line with international recommendations and the best practices of the EU member states.

Representatives of legislative and executive authorities, religious groups, media, non-governmental and international organizations and diplomatic corps attended the conference.



The European Union

Two publications were prepared and printed: the first one "State and Church in the EU Member Countries" includes materials shortly depicting state-church relationship models used in the EU and related legal issues. Main types of state and church relationship systems are reviewed in the publication; in particular, countries with state-church system (in accordance with the examples of Denmark, Finland, England, Greece and Malta); the system with separation of state and church (in accordance with the examples of Netherlands and France); and the system of close cooperation of state and church (in accordance with the examples of

Portugal, Spain, Belgium, Italy, Austria, Hungary, Poland, Lithuania and Latvia).

The main goal of the second publication: “Orthodox Church in the EU Member Countries” is to provide interested public, including religious organizations, an opportunity to formulate a well-founded opinion on the relationship between Orthodox churches and state in the EU member states.

The publication is divided into several parts. In its main part, information on those states, where Orthodox church has traditional or dominant status, is given. In those countries, the majority of population belongs to the Orthodox confession. Such countries are: Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Cyprus, and Finland. The publication also reviews the Orthodox communities in those countries, where the latter take a significant place. These countries are: Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland.



The publication includes:

- Main facts;
- Historical extracts/data;
- General legal information;
- General information on the freedom of religion;
- Revision of relevant issues/articles of the country's constitution;
- Revision of legislative norms related to the country's churches/religious organizations;
- Involvement of Church in different activities of state and society;
- Church funding;
- Organization of Church (in accordance with regulations);
- Ceremonial obligations of Church;

Meetings in Eparchies

For meetings in the eparchies of the Georgian Orthodox Church, electronic slides were prepared besides the above mentioned publications. These slides contained information on the EU, its religious picture, extracts from some relevant international documents and the recommendations of international organizations, models used for state-church relationship in the EU member countries, legal status of Orthodox churches, several precedent decisions of the European Human Rights Court, etc. Meetings in the eparchies were held on the basis of the above mentioned visual materials.

The first meeting took place with theclergy of Kutaisi-Gaenati Eparchy. The meeting was attended by Kutaisi-Gaenati Eparchy Metropolitan, Archbishop Kalistrate, the clergy of the Eparchy, State Minister on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration Davit Bakhradze, Deputy Director of the NATO and the EU Informational Center Tamar Medulashvili and employees of the administrations of these organizations.



The meeting was held in the City of Kutaisi, at former Industrialist House Hall, address: Rustaveli Street # 124.

The meeting was opened by Archbishop Kalistrate, who greeted the audience and introduced guests. Mr. Davit Bakhradze talked in detail about the importance of Georgian-European integration, European values and economic and political benefits to be gained as a result of the successful implementation of the EU Association Agreement. The significance of the support of the Church in this process was underlined at the meeting.

The Union Century 21 Programs' Supervisor Paata Gachechiladze made presentation on church-state relationship models used in the EU countries and also spoke on important legal issues with this regard. Diversity in the EU was reviewed and comparison between these models and relevant Georgian systems was made.



After speeches, presenters answered the questions of clergy. A discussion was also held.

Audience members were given an opportunity to present actual issues interesting for them and the Union Century 21 expressed its readiness to provide respective detailed information.



Seminar in Borjomi Eparchy

The second meeting was held in the city of Borjomi. Borjomi and Bakuriani Metropolitan Seraphime, the clergy of the Eparchy, representatives of local self-governing bodies, and active parishioners participated in the meeting.

Mitropolitan Seraphime and Paata Gachechiladze opened the meeting, introduced participants and spoke on the goals of the meeting.

Program Supervisor of the Union Century 21 Paata Gachechiladze and Deputy Director of the NATO and the EU Informational Center Tamar Medulashvili made speeches.

Paata Gachechiladze made presentation about state-church relationship models of the EU member states and on the important legal aspects of such a relationship. Particular attention was attached to the models of relationship between state and Orthodox Church and respective legislative regulation in Bulgaria and Romania.



Relevant materials were processed and presented in Georgian language for the first time and at the same time they were included in the book "Orthodox Churches in the EU Member Countries", published by the Union Century 21. Traditionally, diversity in the EU in the context of state and religious unions relations was highlighted.

Tamar Medulashvili went over Georgian-European integration and its political, economic and social significance for Georgia and its population. Factors hindering this process were reviewed, as well as stereotypes and myths circulating in society and Russian propaganda's role in spreading these stereotypes. The meeting was held in an unofficial environment. The speakers answered the questions of the audience. The attendees were usually given an opportunity to present the issues of their interest, with regard to which the Union Century 21 was ready to provide detailed information.



Workshop in the Batumi and Lazeti Eparchy

The meeting with the clergymen of Batumi and Lazeti Eparchy was organized on Peria Mountain. Batumi and Lazeti Metropolitan Dimitri and other clergy from this Eparchy attended the meeting. Avtandil Beridze, Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara was also a participant.



Meetings in the Eparchies

The meeting with the clergy of Shemokmedi Eparchy was held in Ozurgeti. Archbishop Ioseb, Metropolitan of Shemokmedi Eparchy, hosted the meeting, which, among others, was attended by Giorgi Salukvadze, State Representative and Governor of Guria region and Merab Chanukhvatze, Gamgebeli of Ozurgeti Municipality.



Representatives of the Union Century 21 met Teodore, Archbishop of Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia and other clergy of Akhaltsikhe and Tao-Klarjeti Eparchy in Akhaltsikhe, at the Residence of the Eparchy. Akaki Machutadze, State Representative and Governor of the region attended the meeting.

The Union Century 21 had the meeting in Sachkhere with the clergy and parish of Chiatura and Sachkhere Eparchy. The meeting was organized at the Youth House of Culture.

The meeting with priests and parish of Margveti and Ubisi Eparchy in Zestaponi and on July 18 the meeting with the representatives and parish of Nikortsminda Eparchy in Ambrolauri were held. These events were organized at the conference halls of local municipalities and attended by the representatives of local authorities.

David Bakradze, State Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration and Paata Gachechiladze, Program Director of the Union Century 21 made speeches at the meetings.



In his speeches David Bakradze reviewed the process of European integration of Georgia, its political, economic and social importance for the country and for its population. He also spoke on myths and stereotypes prevailing in society.

Paata Gachechiladze informed audiences on the models of relationship between state and church used in the EU countries and on key legal aspects of such relationship. Special interest was shown towards respective practices in those countries, which had been the members of the socialist camp or the former Soviet Union (Romania, Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia). The diverse forms of relationship between state and church used in the EU space were highlighted at the meetings. These models and respective situation in Georgia were compared.

Representatives of the Union Century 21 met Theodore, Archbishop of Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia and other clergy of Akhaltsikhe and Tao-Klarjeti Eparchy in Akhaltsikhe, at the Residence of the Eparchy. Akaki Machutadze, State Representative and Governor of the region attended the meeting.

The Union Century 21 had the meeting in Sachkhere with the clergy and parish of Chiatura and Sachkhere Eparchy. The meeting was organized at the Youth House of Culture.

The meeting with priests and parish of Margveti and Ubisi Eparchy in Zestaponi and on July 18 the meeting with the representatives and parish of Nikortsminda Eparchy in Ambrolauri were held. These events were organized at the conference halls of local municipalities and attended by the representatives of local authorities.

David Bakradze, State Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration and Paata Gachechiladze, Program Director of the Union Century 21 made speeches at the meetings.



Georgian-European integration, its political, economic and social significance for Georgia and its population were discussed traditionally. Factors hindering this process, stereotypes and myths circulating in society and the role of Russian propaganda in spreading these stereotypes were also reviewed.

A presentation on the models of state-church relationship used in the EU member countries and on relevant key legal aspects was introduced to the audience. The diversity of such relations existent in the EU was highlighted and comparison was made between these models and the situation in Georgia. A focus was

October 25

• **Marneuli and Hujabi Eparchy**

26 October

• **Dmanisi and Agarak-Tashiri Eparchy**

December 23

• **Khornabuji and Hereti's Eparchy**

made on the status of religious organizations, religious groups and on situation in financial relations, teaching religion in public schools, proselytism and other important issues. Paata Gachechiladze, Program Director of the Union Century 21, Archil Karaulashvili, First Deputy State Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, Giorgi Pareshashvili, Deputy Director of the Information Center on NATO and the EU and IaTikanadze, the FES Director participated in the meeting(s).



Surami and
Khashuri
Eparchy

Bodbe Eparchy

Poti and Khobi
Eparchy



Presentation of the Book

"Orthodox Church in the Countries Members of the European Union"
The Book - "Orthodox Churches in the EU Member Countries" was developed and published.

In Georgia, there is a lack of Georgian-language literature reflecting the models of relationship between state and church in the EU member states and in other democratic countries. In this regard, publications developed or translated by the Union Century 21, for example, "Freedom of Religion and Faith" (2003), "State and Church in the EU Member Countries" (2006), "Legal Regulation of the Relationship between State and Church" (2013) can be regarded to be an attempt to fill such a gap.



"Orthodox Church in the Countries Members of the European Union"

In Georgia, there is also a deficit of literature or data on the status of Orthodox churches (majority of Georgia's population belongs to Orthodox Church) in the EU space. Georgian clergy and population in general are interested in this issue, particularly in the context of Association Agreement with the EU.

In view of the above, great importance was attached to the said publication. For the first, the focus is made on how the status of Orthodox churches, their relationship with state agencies, issues of restitution, funding, religious buildings and others are regulated in the EU space. This information illustrates general status of Orthodox Churches in those countries, where the majority or the minority belongs to this religion or where it is acknowledged to be the state religion.

Secondly, the publication contributed to breaking stereotypes on religion, traditions and spiritually "empty" Europe, widely spread in the certain parts of society and actively supported by some forces.

Presentation of the book was organized at Tbilisi Marriott Hotel. It was attended by the representatives of religious groups, legislative and executive authorities, NGO sector, media and diplomatic corps.

David Bakradze, State Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, Father Giorgi Zviadadze, Protopresbyter, Rector of Tbilisi Theological Academy and Seminary; Paata Gachechiladze, Program Director of the Union Century 21; Ia Tikanadze, Director of the Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung Georgia and others made welcoming speeches at the presentation.

Presentation of the book was officially included in the "Europe Days in Georgia" program organized by the Staff of State Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration and the Information Center on NATO and the EU.

Interreligious Council

Interreligious Working Group (Council). It was decided to implement the joint project "Religions against Drug Addiction" in the involvement of religious organizations, which were the members of Interreligious Council. The Union Century 21 elaborated a project that considered organizing conference in participation of the above religious organizations. The project envisioned meetings with persons convicted of drug-related crimes; meetings with students; preparation of a TV program for Public Broadcaster; publication of informative booklets and execution of joint prayer dedicated to International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.



the Interreligious Council made decision to support the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia in its **'No to Violence!'** campaign against Domestic Violence.



“Religions and the Problem of Early Marriage in Georgia”

Forum

The forum was held at Saint Andrew the First Called Georgian University of the Patriarchate of Georgia (Address: Ilia Chavchavadze Avenue # 53a, 4th floor, Conference Hall)

Leaders of the religious communities, the members of the Interreligious Council (the Georgian Orthodox Church and 10 other



religious associations) participated in the forum. It was also attended by the representatives of legislative and executive authorities, international organizations and diplomatic corps.



"Prevention of Early/Children Marriages in Georgia"

Forum

The Union Century 21 organized the forum - **"Prevention of Early/Children Marriages in Georgia"**. It was attended by the representatives of religious groups (the members of the Interreligious Council), Chairwomen of the Education and Science Committee of the Parliament of Georgia, Deputy Minister of Justice of Georgia, representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs, diplomatic corps, international organizations, non-governmental sector and academic circles. Participants discussed ways for problem resolution and future cooperation.





Meetings in Kakheti Region

The first meeting was held in the city of Telavi, at the hotel "Old Telavi". It was attended by the representatives of local Muslim clergy, elders and reputable persons from the village of Karajala of Telavi Municipality and Pankisi Gorge, Majoritarian MP from Telavi, Assistant to the First Deputy Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia and the Deputy Minister on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Georgia.



The second meeting was organized in the town of Kachreti, at "Kachreti Ambassador Hotel". Clergymen, elders and reputable persons from the villages of Iormugalno, Duzagrama, and Lambalo of Sagarejo municipality attended the meeting. The third meeting was held at Lagodekhi municipality. It was attended by the representatives of local Muslim clergy, elders and reputable persons from the villages of Paldo and Kazlari.



Ms. Lela Bakradze, Director of the UN Population Fund in Georgia, the Shiite and Sunni leaders of the Administration of all Muslims of Georgia,

the high-ranking officials of the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, the representatives of local authorities, the prosecutor's office and police made speeches for the meeting participants.



Joining Interreligious Efforts for the Prevention of Harmful Practices in Georgia

The Union Century 21 held working meetings with the clergy of the Administration of all Muslims of Georgia within the scope of the project: “Joining Interreligious Efforts for the Prevention of Harmful Practices in Georgia”.

The first meeting was held in the city of Batumi, at the office of the Administration of all Muslims of Georgia. The second meeting was conducted at the Sunnite Religious Center of the Village of Meore Kesalo, and the third meeting was organized at Marneuli Mosque with Shiite clergy.



Questions of early marriage, family violence and the role of religious unions in the resolution of these problems were reviewed at the meetings. Certain viewpoints with regard to future joint actions in participation of government, religious unions and non-governmental sector were expressed. The importance of increasing awareness of the youth, the role of the family in particular and the public in general in resolution of the said problems was stressed.

Organizational details of the conference - “*The Role of Religion in the Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls*” were discussed. Meeting participants got acquainted with the agenda of the conference and the working version of the announcement to be adopted at the conference.



The Role of Religion in the Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls

11 July, 2017

Grand Hall of the Tbilisi Marriott Hotel



09:45 – 10:30

Registration of participants, welcome coffee.

10:30 – 10:45

Opening the conference.

Moderator:

Ms. TheaGogotishvili, Representative of the Patriarchate of Georgia,
Inter-Religious and International Affairs

10:45 – 12:15

State efforts for the prevention of harmful practices of early/child marriage
and FGM

Mr. George Volski, Deputy Chairperson of the Parliament of Georgia;

Mr. Dimitri Tskitishvili, Gender Equality Council of the Parliament of
Georgia, Member of the Council;

Mr. Gocha Lortkipanidze, Deputy Minister of Justice;
Mr. Shalva Khutsishvili, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs;
Ms. Lia Gigauri, Deputy Minister of Education and Science;
Mr. Petre Kankava, Deputy State Minister for Reconciliation and Civil Equality;
Sheikh Ramin Igidov, Administration of all Muslims of Georgia;
Muphti IasinAliev, Administration of all Muslims of Georgia;
Ms. Lela Bakradze, Assistant Representative, UNFPA Country Office in Georgia.

12:45 – 13:15 Open Discussion

13:15 – 13:30 Adoption of the
statement of the Administration of all Muslims of Georgia.

12:45 – 13:00 Concluding remarks: further prospects of collaboration.

**Statement by the Administration of Muslims of All Georgia
Adopted at the Conference on the Role of Religion
in the Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls**

The institution of the family has been the nucleus and basis of society and state from the ancient times until now.

The family is an assenting unit

base on equality, where people live harmoniously and treat each other with respect and affiliation and also care for each other. The favorable family environment is essential for a person's personal development and full realization of his/her potential.

Building a healthy family foundation requires physical as well as moral and psychocological maturity. A couple has to assume a great responsibility while raising a family and bear in mind that it requires loyalty, dedication and coping with various challenges arising during life time.

It is of the paramount importance that the Government of Georgia limited marriage registration to the age of 18 without exceptions.

It's absolutely unacceptable for us to encourage a harmful practice of early/child marriage and in some cases forced early/child marriage that is against the existing law.

This harmful practice has an adverse effect on adolescents, especially girls, affecting their education, health and development. We believe that happiness of starting a family goes hand in hand with great responsibility, though in most cases adolescents are not ready to exercise it.

The facts of female genital mutilation are totally unacceptable for us. This harmful practice was criminalized in Georgia in 2017.

No tradition or custom can justify such practice.

This practice of female genital mutilation is totally inadmissible for Islam.

Inter-Religious Dialogue on the Prevention of Violence against Women and Harmful Practices

25 April, 2018

Tbilisi Marriot Hotel

10:30 –10:40	Opening of the conference Moderator: Ms.TheaGogotishvili - Representative of the Patriarchate of Georgia in Inter-Religious and International Affairs .
10:40 – 10:55	State effort for the prevention of violence against w omen and of harmful practices Ms.SopoJaparidze - Assistant of the Prime -Minister of Georgia in Human Rights and Gender Issues; Chairperson of Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence Issues .
10:55 – 11:10	Joint effort for the prevention of violence against women and g irls and harmful practices Ms. Lela Bakradze, Assistant Representative, UNFPA Country Office in Georgia .
11:10 – 11:35	The qualitative research of early/child marriage – main findings and recommendations Ms. Lela Shengelia - Head, MCH Division, National Center for Disease Control and Public Health .
11:35 – 11:50	Research on violence against women - preliminary findings Mr.TengizTsekvava – Deputy Executive Director of National Statistics Office of Georgia .
11:50 – 13:15	Dialogue on the role and contribution of religious confessions and com munities in the elimination of violence and harmful practices against women and g irls. Representatives of religious confessions: The Administration of all Muslims of Georgia; The Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia; The Jewish Community; The Diocese of Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Holy Church in Georgia; The Apostolic Administration of the Caucasus; The Gospel Faith Church of Georgia; The Yezidi Community; The Evangelical -Lutheran Church; The Evangelical -Baptist Church. Representatives of the g overnment: Mr.AlexandreBaramidze, Deputy Minister of Justice; Ms.NatiaMezvrishvili - Deputy Minister of Interior; Mr.ZazaSopromadze - Deputy Minister of Labour, Health and Social Affairs; Mr.ZazaVashakmadze - Chairman of the State Agency for Religious Affairs . Open Discussion .
13:15 – 13:30	Concluding remarks and further s teps.
13:30	Refreshments .





Workshop in Kvemo Kartli region, Marneuli and Bolnisi Municipalities

Three (3) meetings were organized in Kvemo Kartli region, Marneuli and Bolnisi municipalities.

The first meeting hall of the premises of Marneuli Municipality, representatives of the Union Century 21 met with women representing the Administration of all Muslims of Georgia and its several organizations. At the same hall, the meeting was held with the clergy of the Administration of all Muslims of Georgia working in Marneuli municipality.

The meeting hall of the premises of Bolnisi Municipality, the meeting with the Muslim clergy of Bolnisi and Dmanshi municipalities was organized.

At the meetings Ms. Lela Bakradze reviewed in detail the problem of early marriage and family violence in Georgia, the work of the UNFPA to this end, and the model of cooperation formed with the Administration of all Muslims of Georgia. She underlined the importance of such cooperation while the religion, including Islam, is significant social phenomenon in Georgia. It was emphasized that position of the Administration of all Muslims of Georgia and its declaration on the above issues was very important for resolution of the said problems.



Ms. Leila Suleimanova made report at the meetings. Her speech dealt with the analyses of early marriage and family violence and respective legal, psychological and educational aspects. The adverse affects of these problems on youth education, health, self-development and economic well-being were showed in a clear manner. Ms. NatoShavlakadze, an expert of the National Network against Violence provided her assistance at the meetings.



Participants were provided information on the work performed by the government of Georgia in this field. They got acquainted with respective legal framework passed within the scope of civil code, administrative procedures code and other legislative acts. International practice used for the resolution of these problems, results of a respective research and acting legal framework was reviewed.



Supporting Georgia's further Integration with the European Union

The goal of the project was to contribute to Georgia's integration into western structures and promote western democratic values. Through the execution of this project, the awareness of the clergy of the Georgian Orthodox Church increased. The clergymen of the Georgian Orthodox Church, having direct, permanent and close relations with the majority of Georgia's population - parish of the Orthodox Church, was the major target group; however it was also important to

provide information to the representatives of the Muslim community and the Armenian Apostolic Church. In all, 4 one-day information meetings were organized for the representatives of the above churches in west and east Georgia. During the first part of the meeting, participants were provided with comprehensive information on the EU, its history, activities and structures, economic and political characteristics and on Georgia's integration into the EU, as well as on positive perspectives of this process in the context of the country's security, political, economic and social benefits.



Support to Combating Hate Speech - the Way to the Freedom of Faith and European Integration

Hate speech is a relatively new term and understanding in Georgia. The different circles of society and clergy have no clear understanding of this problem.

They do not consider some usually used terms or phraseology to be hate speech or insult.

At the same time, some persons or groups have clearly xenophobic positions and attitudes.

Hence, the purpose of the project was to raise awareness of representatives of the Georgian Orthodox Church (as well as of other religious groups) of the hate speech related problems, use their potential for reducing the use of such speech and xenophobic attitudes in society and respectively strengthen tolerance and support harmonious coexistence of different religious, ethnic or linguistic groups.



Joint Effort for the Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls and Harmful Practices

(Resource Package)

The Union Century 21 has been cooperating with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) since 2016 in the format of interreligious dialogue, which is an important platform for discussing the social issues significant for Georgia and its society.

These problems include child marriage and domestic violence

and these problems cannot be solved without communicating with the population and increasing their awareness.

Religious institutions can play an important role in this regard. Great confidence of the population and the authority of these institutions give an important opportunity to contribute to the efforts of the State to eliminate child marriage and domestic violence.

The project was implemented with the support of UNFPA in partnership with ATIPFund – State Fund for Protection and Assistance of Victims of Human Trafficking.



The common experience showed that each confession has unanimous attitude towards these issues. These are such social problems that unite all and give the opportunity of cooperation, at the meeting held with the support of the UNFPA and the European Union, it was agreed that an information resource, in the form of a booklet,

would be created on the issues such as child marriage and domestic violence to include information on legal framework as well as on support services suggested by the state.



Within the framework of the project, the first informational meeting with the priests of the Georgian Orthodox Church was held at the Patriarchate of Georgia.

The event was attended by the bishops of the Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia, Metropolitan Theodore (Chuadze), Metropolitan Andrew of Gori, Athena (Gvazava) and the clergy of Mtskheta-Tbilisi Eparchy.

The purpose of the meeting was to provide clergy with comprehensive information on statistics, legislative framework and practices with regard to early marriage and domestic violence, as well as on the priorities of state policy to combat these problems.

An interesting discussion was held and future activities were planned/agreed.



Meetings in the Eparchies of the Patriarchate of Georgia.

One of the main objectives of the project was to increase the level of awareness of the clergy of the Georgian Orthodox Church on NATO, as well as on relationship and cooperation between Georgia and the North Atlantic Alliance. Another important objective of the project was to break stereotypes and struggle against fake information intensely spread by the Russian propaganda.



Within the scope of the project, five information meetings and extended interreligious forum (in participation of eight key religious unions of Georgia)

were organized in the eparchies of the Georgian Orthodox Church, which were attended by the representatives of different branches of authorities, non-governmental sector, international organizations and diplomatic corps.

Interreligious Forum

TIME	Opening of the meeting.
10:00	Moderator: Ms.TheaGogotishvili- Representative of the Patriarchate of Georgia in Inter-Religious and InternationalAffairs; Dr. SergoVardosanidze-PhD, Rector of Saint Andrew the First Called Georgian University of the Patriarchate of Georgia
10:05	I - Georgia and the North Atlantic Alliance Presentation of the project,Mr. Paata Gachechiladze,theUnion Century21; Executive Director.
10:10	Ms. PiritPikker,Deputy Head ofthe NATO Liaison Office in Georgia
10:20	Ms.NinoBolkvadze, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Director of the Information Center on NATO andthe EU;
10:25	Mr.ZakariaKutsnashvili,Member of Legal Issues Committee of the Parliament of Georgia.
10:30	Mr.TsotneZurabiani,Member of the Committee on European Integration of the Parliament of Georgia
10:40	Mr.ZazaVashaymadze,Chairman of the State Agency for Religions Issues
11:00	II - Representatives of Religious Confessions
11:15	Q&A,Participants' speeches
10:00	Concluding remarks Mr. Paata Gachechiladze,the Union Century 21; Executive Director; Ms. TheaGogotishvili-Representative of the Patriarchate of Georgia in Inter Religious and International Affairs
10:00	Refreshments.







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