

## **REMARKS OF KENNETH WOLLACK**

**CENTRAL ASIA-CAUCASUS INSTITUTE AND NDI  
PRESIDENT MIKHEIL SAAKASHVILI  
GEORGIA AFTER THE ROSE REVOLUTION: REBUILDING DEMOCRACY AND STABILITY  
FEBRUARY 24, 2004**

I AM KEN WOLLACK, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE (NDI). I WOULD LIKE TO JOIN DR. FRED STARR AND THE CENTRAL ASIA-CAUCASUS INSTITUTE OF SAIS IN WELCOMING PRESIDENT SAAKASHVILI AND ALL OF YOU TO THIS TIMELY EVENT.

MIKHAIL SAAKASHVILI HAS, OVER THE YEARS, COME TO WASHINGTON IN MANY INCARNATIONS—AS A STUDENT, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, JUSTICE MINISTER, LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION NATIONAL MOVEMENT, MAYOR OF TBILISI, AND NOW PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC. POINTING TO THE MYRIAD OF CHALLENGES THAT PRESIDENT SAAKASHVILI MUST NOW MEET, THERE ARE THOSE OBSERVERS WHO MIGHT CONCLUDE THAT HE IS LOOKING BACK AT THOSE SCHOOL DAYS WITH NOSTALGIA—WHEN HE ONLY HAD TO ANSWER TO THE PROFESSORS AND NOT TO THE POPULACE, WHEN HE WAS ONLY BURDENED WITH HIS OWN TUITION COSTS AND NOT THE COST OF A NATION’S ECONOMIC RECOVERY.

BUT THOSE WHO REALLY KNOW GEORGIA AND THE PRESIDENT WILL COME TO A DIFFERENT CONCLUSION. THAT MISHA SAAKASHVILI AND HIS DEMOCRATIC COLLEAGUES HAVE BEEN PREPARING FOR THIS DAY FOR THE PAST DECADE – WHEN THEY WOULD HAVE THE MANDATE AND OPPORTUNITY TO INSTITUTE GENUINE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REFORMS. FOR YEARS, WHILE BOTH IN GOVERNMENT AND IN OPPOSITION, THEY HAD AGITATED FOR THESE REFORMS.

SUPPORTED BY USAID, THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR MOCRACY AND MOST RECENTLY BY THE OSCE, NDI HAS BEEN FORTUNATE TO WORK IN GEORGIA FOR THE PAST 12 YEARS, ASSISTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL PARTIES, PARLIAMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY. AND IT IS ONLY FITTING TO RECOGNIZE A FEW PEOPLE HERE TODAY: U.S. AMBASSADOR TO GEORGIA, RICHARD MILES & SHARON MILES; GEORGIAN AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S., LEVAN MIKELADZE; AMBASSADOR LYNN PASCOE, FORMER USAID MISSION DIRECTOR MICHAEL FARBMAN, AND DEPUTY ASSISTANT AID ADMINISTRATOR GLORIA STEELE.

AS SO MANY OF YOU KNOW, WITH ALL OF ITS FAULTS, WITH ALL OF ITS PROBLEMS, WITH ALL OF ITS WEAKNESSES, THERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN SOMETHING DIFFERENT ABOUT GEORGIA—A POLITICAL FERMENT AND ENERGY THAT DISTINGUISHED IT FROM ITS POST-SOVIET NEIGHBORS.

DURING THE 1990s THERE EMERGED AN ACTIVE AND ASSERTIVE CIVIL SOCIETY, AND A GROUP OF YOUNG AND TALENTED DEMOCRATIC REFORMERS, OF WHICH MISHA SAAKASHVILI WAS A LEADER. THESE REFORMERS WERE IN

GOVERNMENT, IN PARLIAMENT, IN POLITICAL PARTIES. FROM THEIR PERCH IN PARLIAMENT, THEY ESTABLISHED ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSIONS, ORGANIZED DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS, FORCED THE RESIGNATIONS OF CORRUPT GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND AMENDED NATIONAL BUDGETS PROPOSED BY THE EXECUTIVE. AND YES, THERE WAS A PRESIDENT WHO ACCEPTED, IF NOT SUPPORTED, THIS DIFFUSION OF POWER. A UNIQUE CONCESSION IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD.

BUT AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY, SOMETHING CHANGED AS THE DEMOCRATIC REFORMERS WERE SIDELINED OR IGNORED. AND PROBLEMS BEGAN MOUNTING—THE ECONOMY STALLED, OFFICIAL CORRUPTION ROSE, INDEPENDENT MEDIA WAS THREATENED AND ELECTIONS WERE MARRED BY WIDESPREAD FRAUD. SOMEDAY WE MAY LEARN EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED AND WHY.

THUS BEGAN THE PERIOD WHEN THE ANALYSTS AND THE PROFESSIONAL PESSIMISTS BEGAN WRITING GEORGIA OFF—CALLING THE COUNTRY THE NEXT FAILED STATE. BUT, AS WAS THE CASE WITH MARK TWAIN, REPORTS OF GEORGIA’S DEATH “WERE GREATLY EXAGGERATED.”

LAST YEAR, WHEN THE AUTHORITIES ATTEMPTED TO ORGANIZE A SERIOUSLY FLAWED ELECTORAL PROCESS – DESIGNED, IN FACT, TO ACHIEVE A SPECIFIC OUTCOME – CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZED TO EXPOSE THE MISCONDUCT. AND WHEN THE THEN-PRESIDENT ATTEMPTED TO SEAT AN ILLIGITIMATELY ELECTED PARLIAMENT, IT WAS DEMOCRATIC PARTY LEADERS LED BY MISHA SAAKASHVILI, AND BACKED BY THE PEOPLE OF GEORGIA, WHO COURAGEOUSLY AND PEACEFULLY DEMANDED AND REGAINED THEIR FUNDAMENTAL POLITICAL RIGHTS.

THE ROSE REVOLUTION AGAIN DEMONSTRATED THAT DEMOCRATIC ASPIRATIONS CAN BE REALIZED EVEN IN HOSTILE ENVIRONMENTS. AND THAT UNMISTAKABLE MESSAGE HAS INSPIRED DEMOCRATS AND FRIGHTENED AUTOCRATS THROUGHOUT THE REGION.

BUT THE END OF THE STORY HAS NOT BEEN WRITTEN. AS FORMER POLISH FOREIGN MINISTER BRONISLAW GIEREMEK REMINDS US: “DEMOCRACY IS BY NO MEANS A PROCESS THAT GOES FROM TRIUMPH TO TRIUMPH NOR IS IT EXEMPT FROM CREATING THE VERY CONDITIONS THAT UNDERMINE IT. ON THE CONTRARY, THE HISTORY OF DEMOCRACY IS ALSO A HISTORY OF MORAL COMPROMISES, DOWNFALLS AND ECONOMIC CRISES.”

MR. PRESIDENT, THE FRIENDS OF GEORGIA IN THIS ROOM AND ELSEWHERE RECOGNIZE THE DAUNTING TASK YOU NOW FACE. YOU MUST DEAL WITH SERIOUS TERRITORIAL AND SECURITY ISSUES AND POWERFUL NEIGHBORS; YOU MUST ROOT OUT OFFICIAL CORRUPTION AT ALL LEVELS AND FIND WAYS TO COLLECT TAXES, AND TO DELIVER ELECTRICITY AND WATER. AND YOU MUST

DEEPEN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS UPON WHICH THE ROSE REVOLUTION WAS CREATED.

YOU HAVE EVERY RIGHT MR. PRESIDENT TO EXPECT THE SUPPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AS YOU EMBARK ON THIS HISTORIC CAMPAIGN—SUPPORT THAT GOES BEYOND AN INITIAL HONEYMOON PERIOD. THE STAKES HAVE NEVER BEEN HIGHER FOR THE PEOPLE OF GEORGIA AND FOR MILLIONS OF YOUR NEIGHBORS WHO STAND TO BENEFIT FROM A UNITED, DEMOCRATIC, AND PROSPEROUS GEORGIA.

MR. PRESIDENT, THANK YOU FOR JOINING US. IT IS AN HONOR TO HOST YOU THIS AFTERNOON.