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**NDI POLL: GEORGIAN DREAM, IVANISHVILI REMAIN MOST POPULAR;
MARGVELASHVILI AND BAKRADZE LEAD PRESIDENTIAL RACE**

TBILISI – Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili remains the most popular political leader in Georgia with a 69 percent approval rating, while 50 percent rate the Georgian Dream Coalition as the “party” closest to them, according to the findings of a public opinion survey released here today by the National Democratic Institute (NDI).

Speaker of parliament Davit Usupashvili and Georgian Dream presidential candidate Giorgi Margvelashvili are the next most popular coalition leaders with Usupashvili having an approval rating of 60 percent and Margvelashvili receiving 56 percent.

Eighty-one percent of those surveyed think it is important for Georgia to have a strong opposition; United National Movement (UNM) was identified as the strongest opposition party by 42 percent of those surveyed. Respondents also cited Democratic Movement-United Georgia at 8 percent; and Georgian Dream and Labor Party tied at 5 percent each.

Among opposition leaders, Parliamentary Minority Leader Davit Bakradze is the most popular, with a favorable rating of 49 percent, followed by Giorgi Targamadze at 36 percent, Shalva Natelashvili at 34 percent and Nino Burjanadze at 33 percent.

When asked whom they would most like to see as president of Georgia (as opposed to whom they like or dislike), 39 percent named Giorgi Margvelashvili and 18 percent named Davit Bakradze, followed by 7 percent for Nino Burjanadze and 3 percent each for Shalva Natelashvili and Giorgi Targamadze.

The combined 26 percent of those who answered “don’t know,” “refuse to answer” or “no candidate” is large enough to determine both the final results of the first round and whether there will be a second round election.

Luis Navarro, NDI’s country director in Georgia, said, “As we approach the Oct. 27 presidential election, Giorgi Margvelashvili holds a more than 2 to 1 lead over his closest rival. Davit Bakradze currently holds a better than 2 to 1 margin over the rest of the opposition candidates. However, the final results as well as whether there will be a second round election will be determined by those who have not yet expressed their support for any candidate.”

These findings were part of a broader survey that found that voters care most about jobs, territorial integrity and health care. The survey looked at issues of public importance, perceptions of democracy and attitudes toward reforms, as well as various domestic and foreign policy issues.

The results reflect data collected from Aug. 18 to Sept. 3 in face-to-face interviews with a nationwide representative sample of Georgian speakers that included 3,838 completed interviews. The survey has an average margin of error of +/-2%.

NDI’s survey work is funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and carried out by the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC).

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NDI is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working to support and strengthen democratic institutions worldwide through citizen participation, openness and accountability in government. More information is available at www.ndi.org.