



Signing Ceremony for the United States and Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Remarks With Georgian Foreign Affairs Minister Grigol Vashadze in the Treaty Room
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SECRETARY RICE: Good morning. I am very pleased to welcome here my colleague, Georgian Foreign Minister Vashadze, to sign the United States-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership.

Georgia is a very important partner of the United States, a valued partner. Our relationships rest, of course, on shared values of democracy, on security, on economic prosperity. And this Charter underscores the principles and outlines a way to advance our relationship and our cooperation in defense, trade, energy security, strengthening democratic institutions, people-to-people contacts, and cultural exchanges.

The United States supports and will always support Georgia's sovereignty and its territorial integrity, as well as its Euro-Atlantic aspirations and its integration into the institutions of the Euro-Atlantic. The pace of Georgia's integration with NATO should depend on the desires of Georgians themselves and on Georgia's ability to meet NATO standards.

As a friend and a partner of the United States, we are committed to helping Georgia realize the aspirations of those who gathered in Tbilisi five years ago to demand peaceful change. The Rose Revolution captured the imagination of the world and inspired others seeking freedom. And I know that this Charter will help our two nations realize our shared goals of creating a more secure, democratic, and prosperous world.

I am so pleased to have you here. I know that we will have a very short time to work together. You left a very good and comfortable life to work for your country. I'm going back to a very good and comfortable life after having worked for mine.

FOREIGN MINISTER VASHADZE: And we'll still continue our friendship.

SECRETARY RICE: And we will continue our friendship, because the relationship between Georgia and the United States is one that has grown over the last eight years of the President's Administration. But I want you to know, and I want the Georgian people to know, that they will always have a friend in the United States of America.

Thank you.

FOREIGN MINISTER VASHADZE: Thank you, Madame Secretary. This is a historic day for my country. This is a historic day for my nation. The Charter we're going to sign shortly strengthens close strategic partnership between Georgia and the United States, and stressing that countries undersigning this legal instrument, this legal document, share a vital interest in strong, prosperous, independent, sovereign, and territorially integral Georgia.

This is something Georgian nation has been aspiring to and this is the stepping stone which will bring Georgia to Euro-Atlantic structures, to membership within NATO, and to return to family of Western and civilized nations.

We are very proud that we live to this day. And we would like to stress that we appreciate what the United States has been doing for us. And we understand that this document and our strategic partnership brings not only rights, but also obligations to Georgia to be responsible ally, to be democratic, open, and liberal society. And I think together with American help and American advice, we will reach that goal.

Madame Secretary, thank you very, very much.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you. We'll go and sign.

MODERATOR: Ladies and gentlemen, the United States Secretary of State and the Foreign Minister of Georgia are now signing the United States and Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership. As you have heard, this Charter represents intensified engagement between the United States and Georgia on defense, democracy, trade, economic reform, and cultural exchanges.

(The Charter was signed.)

MODERATOR: Ladies and gentlemen, this concludes our program for today. (Applause.)

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