

YEPP SEMINAR
“NEW CHALLENGES – NEW CHANCES FOR
SOUTH CAUCASUS COUNTRIES:
Intercultural Dialogue as a Tool for
Peace and Democratic Stability”

Welcome speech by the Chairman of the
New Conservative Party of Georgia (NCP),
Mr. David Gamkrelidze, MP

Tbilisi, September 30, 2005

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests,

Allow me to greet all of you and thank you for your coming to Georgia to take part in this very important event. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude for the trust the Youth of the European People's party has shown towards our young conservatives. Over these two years, our youth organization has walked the path from becoming a guest of the Youth of the European People's Party to hosting today's event. Today, you are guests of Tbilisi, over thirty-five representatives of the European countries. You will all have an opportunity to see Georgia, our party and our youth. Welcome to Georgia.

I would also like to thank the European Youth Fund and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation for their financial support of this event.

My young friends, you represent the future of the Europe's center-right conservative movement. It is my privilege to open this seminar and speak to you about Georgia as it is today; to speak to you about our political course which aims at giving each individual an opportunity to fully use their natural skills and abilities to the benefit of their own selves and their families as well as to the benefit of the whole society.

You represent those political parties who help individuals in Europe and in the whole world to fully realize their potentials in a free society. While we, the senior political leaders, are regularly engaged in parliamentary life and hold public debates with our opponents, you, the young leaders of our parties, do the important job, which is not often visible, however, without which our success would not be possible. You are a significant force during elections, and sometimes you inspire us to great ideas. Our work will be justified only if we will be able to leave you the kind of political environment, which will be more free and conducive to the success of each individual.

Today, Georgia is in a rather difficult phase. With the Rose Revolution two years behind, the time has come to re-evaluate many things. Those hopes and expectations the Georgian people and our foreign friends had during the revolution have vanished and become a part of history. Disappointment prevails in Georgia today, which is usually caused by dashing of hopes. President Saakashvili and his team have failed to put the country on the path of real democracy and revival. Despite the public and international support only a year ago, the authorities have failed to create investment-friendly environment in the country and start economic reforms. The authorities have diminished the role of the parliament and completely subdued the judiciary as well as imposed full control upon the media. The authorities have hampered the process of decentralization of the country and development of local governance. All these dangerous processes are administered by one man – President Saakashvili and the signs of an authoritarian style of government are already clearly visible.

The problems we are facing today will not be easy to overcome. Well-being requires hard work and sometimes sacrifices. However, the Georgian people should not have to make sacrifices without a purpose and result. I believe that the past and the today's hardship will not be in vain. They will be followed by a better future for Georgia. We trust in God and act in accordance

to the universally recognized moral principles. Our goal is to come to power through constitutional means and democratic elections to restore those fundamental values, which are being trampled under foot. These values are: limited government, the principle of 'checks and balances', independence of the judiciary, rule of law, sanctity of private property, equal opportunities, freedom of speech, protection of human rights, family values and national traditions as well as care for the disadvantaged and senior citizens.

More and more young people are attracted to the view of our party. These are people who are for free enterprise as the only just and viable model of economy, the people who want to live in the kind of society, which respects their views and liberties. We are proud that we are genuinely youth party. Our youth organization is a clear proof to that. Despite the fact that the organization is only three years old, our Young Rights represent the strongest and largest youth organization in Georgia. It carries out various important activities across the entire country and has many young members who are doing a great job for the success of the party and stand ready to defend its view. The leaders of our Young Rights have achieved significant successes and I would like to single out one of them. His name is George Mosidze who has been heading our faction in the Tbilisi City Council for over a year now. Tomorrow, as a common opposition candidate, he will challenge a candidate presented by the authorities. I am firmly convinced that George will be victorious. I am convinced because I have seen the results of the polls, which were very good indeed, and I can see George's rising popularity among the public. This will be a first big step for the young conservatives into big politics. The second and the third echelons of the organization are already prepared to get involved in this process.

Once again, I would like to welcome you all. I am sure that the seminar will be successful. I look forward to meeting with you this evening.

Thank you.