

*THE 4th GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE OF ASIAN POLITICAL PARTIES*

“PEACE AND PROSPERITY IN ASIA”

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Keynote by Mr. David Gamkrelidze, MP, Chairman of the New Rights Party of Georgia

Dear Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Being here to address the 4th General Assembly of International Conference of Asian Political Parties is a great honor indeed. I am very delighted at the opportunity to speak to you today. On behalf of New Rights Party of Georgia, I would like to extend my gratitude to the people who contributed to bringing us together at this important forum, and particularly, our Korean hosts – URI Party and Grand National Party for their kind invitation and hospitality. This conference is truly a great opportunity to get to know one another better and discuss issues that fall in the areas of our common interests.

I represent Georgia – a country in the South Caucasus, between Europe and Asia. Georgia is a nation of rich history and culture, which has made significant contributions into the cultural treasury of the humankind. The 11th and 12th centuries, which are regarded as the era of Eastern as well as the Georgian renaissance, deserve special mention in this regard. Over its 3000-year existence, due to the past historical dynamics, my country has had to lose and then re-gain its independence on more than one occasion. The last wave of annexation in the form of the Russian Bolshevism took place in Georgia in the 20s of the last century. The loss of independence and the unheard-of repressions that followed it not only physically destroyed the best, most educated and industrious part of our society, but it also cut us off from the civilized family of nations. Late in the 80s of the last century, when the National Liberation Movement revived and after the Soviet Union collapsed, we re-gained our independence. Today, it is 15 years since Georgia has been independent striving to become a full-fledged member of the world community of nations. In this regard, the experience of the Asian nations and their political parties is to us of significant importance. We are very much interested in your rich history and the political culture that your political parties have developed over the 20th century.

I believe that in order for all the guests to best understand my remarks, I must first begin by saying a few words about my political party, given that our character shapes our vision. In 2001, we decided to launch a party which would be different from anything that Georgia had ever seen – a political organization created not to support one leading political personality, but spread a vision based on a prudent political philosophy. Also, our goal was to build a party which would go outside of the capital, well into the regions, working with those Georgian citizens who are most often ignored by our political leaders. We believe that that vision for this different party has been successful, given the electoral tests that we have faced thus far - the local government elections in June 2002 and the parliamentary elections in 2003 and 2004.

It is worth noting that during the last parliamentary elections we were the only opposition force which was able to overcome the 7-percent electoral threshold and established the only opposition group at that time – the Right Opposition.

Now, allow me to touch upon the principal subject of our conference. The geopolitical location of our country is a clear indicator that integration with the processes ongoing in Asia is not only useful but also necessary. Asia is not only the largest part of the world in terms of territory, but it is also the most densely populated continent. We think that democracy, peace and stability are those pillars on which the prosperity and security of the Asian nations should be based upon. For its part, the guarantee of harmony and stability is the government, which comes to power through free and fair elections, the government that is accountable before its people and is pursuing the course of democratic development and revival. **Loyalty to the democratic values, the rule of law, protection of human rights, sanctity of private property, freedom of expression, distribution of competencies among the government branches, free entrepreneurship, independent judiciary system, decentralization of government, genuine local self-governance and peaceful coexistence** – these are the essential values that the political systems should have in order to advance peace and sustainable development. No state interest of any kind and even more so no party interest should ever be placed above the human life, freedom of the individual and their well being. Therefore, it is our parties' responsibility to provide our citizens with these rights.

That said, the real situation is rather far from these objectives. The authoritarian tendencies in Asia are still strong. I have to admit that they are not strange to my country either.

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

I have focused your attention to the processes ongoing in my country because I believe that we all have one goal – peace, harmony and prosperity both within our own countries and beyond its borders. It is also very important that not only the separate regions and countries should be economically affluent and politically stable, but also the stable states based on a strong system of political parties, so that the sustainable economic development should be the guarantee of peace and prosperity in Asia.

I would like to reiterate that it is a great honor for me to be addressing this audience. Our party is prepared to make its contributions to the success of today's forum as well as achieving peace and prosperity across the whole Asian continent. I would like to assure you that our efforts in Georgia are geared towards achieving exactly these goals.

Obviously, every nation chooses its own way of development and we value this choice. Our way is the way of liberal democracy and we want to build the kind of country between Europe and Asia that will be loyal to these values. I am confident that Georgia not only has the capacity for it, but also, considering its past and present, is obliged to move along this path. Our goal is to turn our country into a successful example for practicing universally recognized values in this part of the world and we will spare no effort in that regard.

Let me wish you all success and express my readiness and desire for further cooperation.

Thank you.