



# Newsletter

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND AGRICULTURE OF GEORGIA

JULY/2022

## The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture Mr. Otar Shamugia summed up his visit to the US



*“Firstly, I would like to inform the public about our visit to the United States of America. We held very important meetings at the US State Department, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the US Agency for International Development (USAID). During the meetings, we discussed important issues necessary for agricultural development, and highlighted measures being implemented in the country” Mr. Otar Shamugia stated.*

The support from the United States of America, which is an important strategic partner of our country, is particularly important in the agricultural development of Georgia.

“We have provided our partners with comprehensive information about the current situation in the respective area in the country.

We have repeatedly stated, that it is very important for us to increase the production of grain, in particular, to increase wheat production and significantly improve the rate of self-sufficiency in the country. In this direction, the support of the United States is crucial indeed. I would like to note, that we are looking forward to getting support in the aforementioned area.

During the meeting at the US Department of Agriculture, it was mentioned, that the Department is ready to start deep research to study the value chain of wheat production. Moreover, the needs in the respective field will be identified and we will receive the relevant information to plan appropriate measures.

Meanwhile, we held a meeting with the Heads of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), which work in the aforementioned area and have already implemented several projects in different countries. The meeting with the representatives of the CIMMYT was conducted with the support of the US State Department.

We addressed challenges facing wheat production and agreed to cooperate in the respective area. Active cooperation with our strategic partner is crucial for the development of the industry.

We have the ambition to increase wine export in the US market and get much higher results in that respect

In 2022, we signed a contract with one of the very successful American marketing companies, which carries out promotional events for Georgian wine in the US market. Within the framework of our visit to the US, we met with Georgian wine importers together with the representatives of American marketing companies and jointly discussed issues which are crucial to further increase the export of our wine to the United States of America.

Last year we exported over a million bottles of wine to the American market. This year, we have observed an increase of about 15%, although these indicators do not satisfy us and we have the ambition to get much higher results in the respective market; We have all the resources for that. Therefore, it is very important to coordinate the work of the representatives of the sector, producers, and importers, including the company which carries out Georgian wine advertising campaigns in the United States of America.

There are ambitious plans and much greater results can be achieved in the export of Georgian wine to the US market. The Minister also mentioned that representatives of the USAID expressed their readiness to support Georgia in the aforementioned area.

We also held a meeting with the Leadership of the CNFA, as we are all aware, this organization has been implementing several projects and promoting the agricultural sector in Georgia over the years. The representatives of the CNFA expressed their readiness to further continue supporting us. It should be mentioned, that we met with the representatives of the World Bank as well.

Currently, the World Bank is implementing an irrigation support project in Georgia, which amounts to approximately USD 50 million, and will be completed next year. We have already started working on a much larger project, under which, we think about USD 100 million will be invested in the rehabilitation of the irrigation infrastructure. The World Bank will also implement land management reforms and will support the development of other links in the agricultural value chain.

I would like to take an opportunity and express my gratitude and appreciation to our partners and colleagues for their support, and for holding very interesting meetings.

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## USA work visit report of the Minister of Environment Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Otar Shamugia



The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Mr. Otar Shamugia meets U.S. Special Envoy for Global Food Security, U.S. Department of State, Mr. Cary Fowler

*“The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia has built a long-term strategic partnership with the United States of America, which is reflected in the support programs and projects. The financial assistance allocated by the US for already implemented, as well as for current projects has brought important results in the development of the agricultural sector in the country”, stated Mr. Otar Shamugia.*

As stated by the Minister, food security is one of the most important challenges for Georgia, as well as for other countries, especially in light of the crisis in the region.

Currently, it is crucial to have quality seed material, appropriate agricultural equipment, and transfer of modern technologies and knowledge to farmers to ensure food security in



the country, therefore, the support of the United States of America is particularly important in the respective area- was mentioned during the meeting at the US State Department. According to Mr. Cary Fowler, the United States of America continues to support Georgia in the development of the industry, as well as in overcoming existing challenges.

The Ambassador of Georgia to the United States of America, Mr. Davit Zalkaliani, and the Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili attended the meeting.

“It is crucial to discuss not only a short-term perspective, but to consider the medium or long-term perspectives of our cooperation, involving the support from the US, both in terms of expertise and technical means. The visit of the Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture serves the aforementioned purpose and I am confident, that it will bring concrete, tangible results”, said Mr. Davit Zalkaliani.

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## Otar Shamugia meets Jewel Bronaugh, Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.



During the meeting, the Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Mr. Otar Shamugia discussed a wide range of issues, regarding the self-sufficiency in grain production in light of food security in the country, diversification of Georgian wine export markets, increasing access to agricultural equipment, access to the latest technologies and value chain research-related issues.

*“We are planning to take concrete steps to increase wheat productivity. It is quite realistic that Georgia will manage to produce 300-400 thousand tonnes of wheat, which will allow us to reduce our dependence on imports”, stated Mr. Shamugia.*

According to the Minister, Georgian agro-food products have the potential to be exported to the US market; including Georgian wine. It should be mentioned, that as of the last 6th month's data, the export of Georgian wine to the United States of America is increased by 15 per cent.

As stated by the USDA Deputy Secretary of State Mrs. Jewel Bronaugh, the USDA Rural Development Department is ready to continue supporting Georgia's agricultural sector, strengthening farmers' capacities, introducing modern technologies and providing technical support.

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## As part of his working visit, the Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Otar Shamugia held a meeting with the Deputy Assistant Administrator (DAA) in the Bureau for Europe and Eurasia at USAID, Mr. Alexander Sokolowski.



As stated by the Minister, cooperation between the United States and Georgia in agricultural development is crucial, as long as the US is a strategic partner of Georgia.

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) implements several important programs and projects for agricultural development in Georgia, and tangible results are already visible in the respective area. The Minister underlined the importance of the support being provided by USAID to Georgia in the fight against the Asian Stink Bug since 2018.

Mr. Shamugia mentioned, that the Georgian Hazelnut Producers Association together with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture successfully completed the "Hazelnut Crop Survival Program", which started in 2018. Consequently, the hazelnut

sector was able to double and increase the yield ( from 30,000 tonnes of low-quality hazelnut to 60,000 tonnes of medium and good-quality hazelnut fruit).

During the meeting, attention was paid to the increase of the export potential of Georgian wine in the United States. Mr. Otar Shamugia spoke about the promotion programs of Georgian wine and noted, that the National Wine Agency plans to carry out several marketing activities in the strategic markets under the ten-year strategy, which will subsequently raise awareness of Georgian wine and will directly affect the growth of Georgian wine exports.

The National Wine Agency cooperates with the American company, which has developed a promotion and marketing plan to increase the awareness of Georgian wine, which will significantly affect and increase the sales of Georgian wine in the US market.

Mr. Alexander Sokolowski expressed his readiness to continue cooperation with the Georgian side through the involvement of the USAID regional office, to support the growth of Georgian wine exports to the United States of America, and help interested companies in making connections, expanding outreach and their professional network.

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## Otar Shamugia: "Georgian wine industry is ready to make an ambitious advertisement in the US"



As part of his working visit to the United States of America, the Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Mr. Otar Shamugia held a meeting with Georgian wine exporters, shop owners and representatives of a marketing company in Washington DC and New York City.

The meeting was held at the office of the marketing company "Colangelo and Partners", where the Minister, Otar Shamugia got familiar with the visions of the companies and expressed his hope, that "Colangelo and Partners" will jointly work with the National Wine Agency on the promotion and marketing plans to raise awareness of Georgian wine in the US market, which will be undoubtedly reflected on the growth of export sales of Georgian wine in the United States.

It should be mentioned, that "Colangelo and Partners" is one of the international marketing companies with 25 years of experience.

*"We hope, that through joint efforts, and consistent, accurate, planned activities, the awareness of Georgian wine will be further increased. Our strategic goal is to create and position "Georgian wine" as a global brand and promote it as a mass-market consumer brand. We think that this is a unique moment in time when the Georgian wine industry is ready to make an ambitious advertisement in America" said Mr Shamugia.*

The strategy for raising awareness of Georgian wine in the United States of America was thoroughly discussed with wine exporters and representatives of an international marketing company during the meeting at the General Consulate of Georgia in New York.

As stated by the Minister, one of the necessary conditions for the success of Georgian wine in the US is to connect Georgian wine companies with American importers, distributors, and trade networks, and at the same time, to support and encourage maximum participation of the US resided importer-distributors in the events planned by the international marketing company.

*"We have high hopes, that planned activities will attract the aforementioned audience and will increase interest in Georgia and Georgian wine", said Mr. Otar Shamugia.*

Minister Shamugia together with the Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Georgia to the United States of America, Mr. Davit Zalkaliani expressed interest in the potential of Georgian wine and sales figures at the wine shop "Bach 13" in Washington.

According to the owner of the shop, Mr. Giga Grigolia, the wine shop "Bach 13" offers American customers an assortment of about 30 wines and alcoholic beverages from Georgia. Moreover, the 8,000-year history of Georgian wine has played an important role in increasing interest in Georgian wine in the current period- was mentioned by Mr. Grigolia.

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## Under the framework of his visit to the US, the Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Mr. Otar Shamugia held a meeting with the President of CNFA (Cultivating New Frontiers in Agriculture), Mr. Sylvain Roy, and the Management Directorate of the Organization.



During the meeting in Washington, Mr. Otar Shamugia declared, that the support of international organizations, as well as sharing global experience are essential for the development of the agricultural sector in the country.

The Minister touched upon the positive results achieved in the fight against the Asian Stink Bug in Georgia and thanked the representatives of the CNFA for their active support in the respective area. Mr. Shamugia highlighted issues, regarding the increase in the hazelnut yield quantity/quality and export.

As mentioned at the meeting, the international organization Cultivating New Frontiers in Agriculture (CNFA) was founded in 1985. It should be mentioned, that CNFA has implemented projects in 43 countries worldwide, with the overall goal to develop the agricultural sector, and increase agricultural productivity and competitiveness. CNFA has been operating in Georgia since 2006 and has implemented important projects in the agricultural field, including 7 completed and 2 ongoing projects.

The president of CNFA, Mr. Sylvain Roy emphasized, that organization is ready to support current agricultural projects in Georgia and expressed a desire to deepen cooperation toward agricultural development in the country.

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## Otar Shamugia meets large exporters of Georgian products in New York City



The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Mr. Otar Shamugia held a meeting with the Heads of the large exporting company of Georgian food products during his working visit to the United States of America.

The Export promotion measures for Georgian products and other related issues have been

discussed by parties during the meeting, which was held at the Consulate General of Georgia in New York.

According to Mr. Shamugia, the diversification of export markets is one of the priorities for Georgia, therefore, establishing Georgian quality products in the largest US market is of the utmost importance for the country.

The Minister expressed interest in the plans, as well as the challenges faced by large exporters. As mentioned at the meeting, the exporters of Georgian products need support from the state to participate in the international exhibitions in the US.

According to Mr. Shamugia, the state is actively involved in the marketing campaigns on the strategic markets, therefore, ensuring maximum support for large exporters in the aforementioned area will be further discussed.

Large exporters are selling Georgian food products ( including Georgian wine, mineral water, natural juices, Churchkhela, dried fruit, apple chips, canned goods etc. ) in the large markets, in nearly 30 states in the US.

According to the exporters, recently, the demand, as well as export of Georgian products have increased in the American market.

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## Within the framework of the visit to the US, the Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Mr. Otar Shamugia met with Mr. Sameh Vahba, Global Director for the World Bank's Urban, Disaster Risk Management, Resilience and Land Global Practice.



Mr. Shamugia expressed his gratitude to the World Bank for supporting the development of various fields in Georgia over the years.

*"I would like to mention the implemented and current irrigation projects supported by the World Bank, which enabled us to make significant progress in the development of irrigation infrastructure," said Mr. Shamugia.*

As mentioned at the meeting, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia has been jointly working with the World Bank on a new project, which envisages investments in the irrigation, land and agricultural fields.

The main direction of the project is the rehabilitation/modernization of irrigation infrastructure. The project also envisages the support to the state-owned organizations in the reform process, in particular, to assist "Georgian Melioration" LTD in improving its financial performance, institutional field, also sustainable operation, investment planning, and irrigation services.

During the meeting, the Global Director of the World Bank, Mr. Sameh Wahba positively evaluated the projects implemented jointly with the World Bank in the irrigation and land management fields in Georgia and emphasized the importance of future cooperation. According to the Global Director, the new project "Georgia's Rural Agricultural Irrigation and Land Project" (GRAIL) will contribute to the further development of sustainable agriculture in Georgia.

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## The US International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center will discuss the support mechanisms for grain self-sufficiency in Georgia.



During the meeting in Washington DC, the Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Mr. Otar Shamugia, and the Special Envoy for Global Food Security at the US Department of State, Mr. Cary Fowler discussed Georgia's wheat self-sufficiency-related issues, which were followed by an immediate response.

General Director of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), Mr. Bram Govaerts, from Washington DC, attended the additional meeting at the Consulate General of Georgia in New York.

The increase in wheat self-sufficiency in Georgia has been thoroughly discussed by parties, who also mentioned, that one of the main prerequisites of wheat self-sufficiency is the supply of quality seed material and an increase in wheat production.

Minister Otar Shamugia gave a comprehensive overview of the plans, concerning the increase in the self-sufficiency of grain crops in Georgia, with the main focus on the production of quality seed material.

As stated by the General Director of CIMMYT, the US International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center will discuss the support mechanisms for grain crop self-sufficiency in Georgia.

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## The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health of Georgia and UNICEF sign a Memorandum of Understanding



*“The high level of lead exposure can have serious consequences for the health of children. The Memorandum aims to implement a program, under which, the aforementioned issues will be thoroughly examined. At the same time, it will allow the National Food Agency to develop recommendations, entailing a list of actions to ensure and promote safe nutrition for children,” said Mr. Khanishvili stated.*

As stated by the representative of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Georgia, Mr. Ghassan Khalil, studying the impact of lead on health is one of the most important issues. Within the framework of the MoU, the parties will make their best efforts to eliminate the problem of lead poisoning in the country by conducting relevant research.

According to Mr. Amiran Gamkrelidze, Director General of the National Public Health Center (NCHC), high lead content-related issues should be settled in Georgia in the next few years through the support of the United Nations Children's Fund and the parameters should be brought closer to European standards.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Trilateral Cooperation was signed between the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health of Georgia (NCHC) and the United Nations Children's Fund in Georgia (UNICEF), which envisages joint research to determine the lead content in spices and prevent negative effects of lead on children and adults.

The First Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. George Khanishvili, the Director General of the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health (NCHC), Mr. Amiran Gamkrelidze, and the representative of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Georgia, Mr. Ghassan Khalil signed the respective MoU.



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Presentation of the Project “Save Nature - Georgia” was held in Krtsanisi Forest Park



The Presentation of the Project “Save Nature - Georgia” funded by the Swedish government, was held in Krtsanisi Forest Park, where the Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Otar Shamugia hosted the high-rank officials: Director General of Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Mr. Carin Jämtin and the Ambassador of Sweden in Georgia Mr.Ulrik Tideström.

Mr. Shamugia expressed his gratitude to the representatives of the Swedish Government, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), and the Ambassador of Sweden for their support in the environmental protection and agricultural development fields and stressed the importance of the project “Save Nature - Georgia”.

The total estimated cost of the project “Save Nature - Georgia” is € 5.5 million. The respective project aims to improve management efficiency and promote sustainable management of natural resources in Georgia, entailing the protection of forests and conservation of biodiversity, also improving protected areas and air quality in the country. The project is in full compliance with the priorities of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement and its implementation will significantly contribute to the rapprochement of Georgia with Europe.

“We aim to improve socio-economic conditions of our population, by protecting nature and sustainable development, which will further contribute to the economic growth of the country. It should be mentioned, that the EU, as well as donor and partner organizations, are providing strong support in the environmental protection and agricultural fields. I believe that coordinated cooperation will enable us to implement

effective reforms necessary for the rapid development of the country” Minister Otar Shamugia said.

“The long-term and close cooperation between Sweden and Georgia has generated very good results in several areas. In the field of environment and climate, we have extensive cooperation involving Parliament, State Institutions ( MEPA/Agencies) and civil society, assisting Georgia in mapping and planning steps and priorities in the transition towards a circular economy, preparation and implementation of legislation, strategies and action plans in the field of biodiversity, air quality monitoring improvement and waste management. I am convinced that our cooperation and bilateral relations will grow stronger, and broader and we will be able to achieve great results through our cooperation” stated Director General of Sida, Mr. Carin Jämtin.

Representatives of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture delivered presentations on the projects implemented in the fields of environmental protection, waste management, biodiversity conservation, climate change and protected areas, which have been carried out in the country with the financial support of the Swedish government and SIDA, involving local partners and international organizations. The conversation touched upon the results achieved within the projects, existing challenges as well as possible solutions

Mrs. Maia Bitadze, Chairperson of the Environmental Protection And Natural Resources Committee, Parliament of Georgia, representatives of the Swedish Embassy, local self-government, donors, implementers, and international and non-governmental organizations attended the event.



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## Trainings are being conducted to promote the implementation of the environmental responsibility system in Georgia in compliance with the EU standards



The Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili, the EU representative in Georgia, Mr. Alexander Daras and the representative of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Mr. Krzysztof Michalak attended the event.

As stated by the Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili, European experts will share their knowledge through respective training and help us to understand in-depth how the Environmental Liability Directive works in the EU countries, also to bring the law enforcement system as close as possible to the European one.”

“Last year, we adopted a new law on environmental liability. It is one of the most important laws dealing with environmental governance issues and is directly related to the improvement of the environmental governance and law enforcement system. We are already starting to put it into practice, which is quite a complex process, new and innovative for our country.

The law focuses on improving and restoring the environment and repairing the damage caused to the environment. This is a systemic change in the environmental pro-

tection field and, from this point of view, it is very important for our specialists to study the European practice that is already in effect in the EU countries”, Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili said.

The training entitled “Determining and Assessing the Measures to Restore Significant Damage Inflicted on the Environment and Preparation of a Restoration Plan” is being carried out within the framework of the EU4Environment project, with the support of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

It should be mentioned, that employees of the National Environmental Agency and the Department of Environmental Supervision under the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture ( which are directly involved in the law enforcement process), are attending the training session.

Within the framework of the training course, the participants will learn about the environmental liability system, environmental restoration technologies and various strategies to overcome environmental problems, regarding degraded urban, agricultural and industrial landscapes. Besides the theoretical training, practical examples will be discussed and field training will be conducted.

In 2021, Georgia adopted the Law on Environmental Liability, in compliance with the provisions of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement. The respective law aims to introduce a system of environmental liability, which will comply with the European standards, and will be based on the “polluter pays principle”, aiming to prevent, eliminate/mitigate and restore the environmental damage.

Under the law, environmental damage program has been created, which aims to prevent damage, restore the state of the environment, improve the state of the historically damaged environment, and conduct environmental research. The agencies responsible for the enforcement of the aforementioned law are the Department of Environmental Supervision (ESD) under the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA) and the LEPL National Environmental Agency.

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## Nino Tandilashvili participates in the annual meeting of the Green Action Task Force



The Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili participates in the annual meeting of the Green Action Task Force. In 2022, the meeting was hosted by Georgia.

During the meeting, the Deputy Minister highlighted a wide range of issues, entailing the concept of green economy development as a priority issue for the country, and the progress achieved in the environmental protection field of Georgia.

Mrs. Tandilashvili underlined the importance of Waste Management Strategy, Climate Change Strategy and Extended Producer Responsibility, she also informed the participants about the obligations taken within the framework of Georgia’s Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC).

The program initiated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) aims to implement a policy which will create the perspective of strong economic growth and increase employment by improving the environmental quality in the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA).

The meeting was attended by the representative of the German Federal Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Nuclear Safety and co-chairman of the program Juergen Keinhorst, and representatives of the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/20908/>

## Steering Committee of the project “Upscaling Global Forest Watch in the Caucasus Region” holds a meeting



The Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Yuri Nozadze attended the meeting of the Steering Committee of the project “Upscaling Global Forest Watch in the Caucasus Region”.

The project is being implemented in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia.

The activities planned under the project, objectives, outputs and outcomes, also mid-term evaluations and recommendations developed under the respective project have been discussed during the meeting.

*“The goals of the aforementioned project are in full compliance with the goals of Global Environmental Conventions, such as the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). It is crucial to discuss issues, regarding the continuation of the project, and the implementation of goals and objectives both at the national level and in the regional context”, said Mr. Yuri Nozadze.*



The project “Upscaling Global Forest Watch in the Caucasus Region” aims to foster transparency in land management in the Caucasus region and overcome challenges of maintenance/restoration of landscapes through the introduction of innovative methods and user-friendly tools, which will contribute to the growth of forests, increase green cover, development of climate-smart agriculture.

The project “Upscaling Global Forest Watch in Caucasus Region” is financed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The project’s implementing agency is the United Nations Environment Program, executing agency is the World Resources Institute, with executing partner Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus. In addition, the project partners include the Ministry of Nature Protection of the Republic of Armenia, the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan Republic, and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia.

The representatives of the Governments of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as the UN Environmental Program, the World Resources Institute, the World Bank and the Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus attended the meeting.



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