

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND AGRICULTURE OF GEORGIA

DECEMBER/2022

Georgia becomes co-Chair of the Bureau and the Standing Committee of the Council of Europe's Convention on the Conservation of Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Berne Convention)

At the 42nd session of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention, Mr Carl Amirgulashvili, Head of the Biodiversity and Forestry Department of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, was elected as Vice-Chairman of the Bureau for one year.

The 42nd meeting of the Standing Committee of the Council of Europe's Convention on the Conservation of Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Berne Convention) was held in Strasbourg, France, where the Committee recognized and approved 66 sites (with a total area of 1.3 million hectares) in Georgia, as Emerald sites. The territories were selected in 2013-2021 and submitted to the Convention.

It is worth mentioning that the emerald network was established in Georgia as part of the implementation of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats and the fulfilment of obligations taken under the EU-Georgia Association Agreement in 2014. The approval and designation of territories as Emerald sites is an important process for the country.

The appointment of a representative of Georgia to the mentioned position will promote active representation and positioning of our country in the structures of the Council of Europe on the one hand, and on the other hand, it will foster more effective implementation of environmental policy in Georgia and improve the protection and management of Georgia's protected areas, which are included in the international network.

Currently, the planning and development of the management plans are actively underway for all emerald sites in the country.



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The Agency of Protected Areas of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture and the Caucasus Nature Fund (CNF) sign the Grant Agreement



"The Agency of Protected Areas continues to improve the employment conditions of rangers and raise their motivation. The mentioned agreement will ensure 610 rangers with the special uniforms made by the tactical clothing leading manufacturer "511". Tusheti Protected Areas Administration will also receive ten sets of uniforms under the grant agreement, "- said the Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr Yuri Nozadze.

The Caucasus Nature Fund (CNF) has been cooperating with the Agency of Protected Areas throughout the years, making significant efforts to develop the protected areas' infrastructure, raise employees' motivation and encourage their engagement in the workplace.

The cooperation includes life and health insurance for all employees of all administrative units of the Agency and salary supplements as well.

The Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Yuri Nozadze, Executive Director of the Caucasus Nature Fund (CNF) Mr. Tobias Muenchmeyer, and Chairman of the Agency for Protected Areas Mr. Davit Iosebashvili signed the Grant Agreement.



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Otar Shamugia meets the Deputy Head of the EU Delegation Projects Unit in Georgia, Katalin German

The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture Mr. Otar Shamugia held a meeting with the Deputy Head of the EU Delegation Projects Unit in Georgia, Mrs. Katalin

During the meeting, the parties highlighted issues of upholding cooperation within the European Neighborhood Program for Rural and Agricultural Development (ENPARD IV).

The Minister expressed his gratitude to the European Union for long-standing cooperation and financial support and emphasized the importance of the program.

"As we are all aware, agricultural development is a priority area for the state. The European Union provides firm support in rural-agricultural development and environmental protection areas. With the support of the EU and donor organizations, we have implemented important projects across the country, but challenges still remain. I believe that joint efforts will enable us to effectively implement the regulatory reform in the sector, which will promote the rapprochement process with the European Union", stated Mr. Otar Shamugia.

As stated by Mrs. Katalin German, jointly with the donor organizations, the European Union supports the effective implementation of the objectives set forth within the EN-



PARD IV project, thus significantly contributing to the country's rapprochement with the European Union.

The discussion touched upon the importance of strengthening the capacities of the National Food Agency and the Agricultural Laboratory, promoting cooperative farms. The parties also discussed the effective implementation of the local support program based on the LEADER/CLLD approach.

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Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture hosts the 29th Steering Committee Meeting of the ENPARD



The 29th meeting of the ENPARD Steering Committee was chaired by the Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture Mr. Otar Shamugia.

The Minister expressed his gratitude and showed appreciation to the European Union for its long-standing cooperation and financial support and emphasized the importance of the aforementioned program.

"The European Union is providing strong support to Georgia in strengthening the rural and agricultural development and environmental protection areas. With the help of the European Union and Donor Organizations, we have successfully completed the three phases of ENPARD. There are still many challenges and I believe that by joint efforts we will be able to effectively reform the sector and get closer to the European Union", said Mr. Otar Shamugia.

The Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili briefed the participants on the implementation of the agricultural development strategy, rural development strategy and the relevant action plans.

Within the framework of the 29th meeting of the ENPARD Steering Committee, the conversation touched upon the issues of strengthening the capacities of the National Food Agency, the restoration / rehabilitation of windbreaks, the effective management of pastures, the expansion of protected areas, the development of ecotourism, the importance of bringing legislation closer to EU standards, future plans and activities.

The First Deputy Minister Mr. George Khanishvili, the First Secretary of the Deputy Head of Cooperation, Delegation to the European Union to Georgia, Mrs. Catalin Gherman, representatives of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Heads of relevant departments of the Ministry attended the meeting.

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Solomon Pavliashvili hosted the representatives of the World Bank



The Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture Mr. Solomon Pavliashvili held a meeting with the representatives of the World Bank.

During the meeting, the parties focused on the development of the Green Growth Strategy of Georgia.

As mentioned, the elaboration of the Strategy will contribute to creating a guiding document for Green Economy Development and promoting the creation of green jobs.

During the meeting, Mr. Pavliashvili emphasized the importance of the following policy documents: Waste Management Strategy, Climate Change Strategy, and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR). The Deputy briefed the representatives of the World Bank on the Environmental Protection Action Program of Georgia and underlined the development of the green economy and the progress achieved in the environmental protection field of the country as top priority issues.

The Heads of the relevant Departments of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture attended the meeting.

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Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture hosts the 29th Steering Committee Meeting of the ENPARD



The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture Mr. Otar Shamugia chaired the 29th meeting of the ENPARD Steering Committee.

The Minister expressed his gratitude to the European Union for its long-standing cooperation and financial support and emphasized the importance of the ENPARD program.

"The European Union supports Georgia in strengthening the rural and agricultural development and environmental protection areas. With the help of the European Union and Donor Organizations, we successfully completed the three phases of ENPARD. There are still many challenges, and I believe that by joint efforts, we will be able to effectively reform the sector and get closer to the European Union", said Mr. Otar Shamugia.

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The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture marks World Soil Day



On 5th December 2022, the World Soil Day celebration event was held by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia. Awarding young cadres with Academician Tengiz (Gizo) Urushadze's certificate of honour represented the

The Minister Mr. Otar Shamugia addressed the invited guests and widely spoke significance of public awareness raising about soil protection and emphasized the measures, implemented by the Ministry for the adoption of principles of sustainable soil

'As you are well aware, rational soil management is directly linked to food security, however, it has remained a global challenge yet. Soil degradation has been also a noteworthy issue that is getting stronger time by time under climate change. In order to rationally manage soils and eliminate existing challenges, qualified specialists among them young cadres have vital importance, for the country. I do believe that with eager and joint synergy, we will be able to care about our soil fertility", stated the Minister.

During the event, the Vice Prime Minister, Minister of the Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia Mr. Levan Davitashvili addressed the participants and, in his speech, highlighted the idea of soil fertility, he noted that sustainable development of the country's economy largely depends on soil fertility.

Herein, the President of the National Academy of Sciences of Georgia Mr. Giorgi Kvesitadze who was among the invited guests drew his attention to the soil importance and noted that in a small country such as Georgia, can be found most of the world's soil.

Within the framework of the event, successful young specialists employed in the public, private and non-governmental sectors of the agricultural field, students of higher educational institutions, and researchers working in the scientific research sector were awarded by Academician Tengiz Urushadze's award certificate of honor.

Mr. Urushadze made a significant contribution to the development of the Georgian School of Soil Science. His professional and public work inspires the future generation and gives them the best example.

According to the Minister's Order, the award ceremony is to be celebrated annually and become a traditional character. Such approaches as well as initiatives to be contributed to the popularization of soil science in Georgia, appreciation name of the outstanding scientist as Professor Urushadze, and to be increased young, successful cadre's motivation.

The First Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture Mr. George Khanishvili, Deputy Ministers Mr. Yuri Nozadze, Mr. Kakha Kakabadze, Mr. Solomon Pavliashvili, and the representatives of I. Javakhishvili State University, National Academy of Sciences of Georgia, Academy of Agricultural Sciences of Georgia, Agrarian University, Georgian Technical University, Batumi Shota Rustaveli University, Iakob Gogebashvili Telavi State University, Akaki Tsereteli State University, Samtskhe-Javakheti State University, National Environmental Agency, Agricultural Scientific Research Center, Georgian Farmers' Association (GFA), Biological Farming Association "Elkana", The Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus (REC Caucasus), Caucasus Environmental NGO Network (CENN) and Heads of relevant departments of the Ministry attended the event.





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George Khanishvili delivers opening remarks at the project "Global Quality and Standards Program in Georgia" (GQSP-Georgia) conclusion meeting



The First Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. George Khanishvili delivered opening remarks at the project "Global Quality and Standards Program in Georgia" (GQSP-Georgia) conclusion meeting. The respective project is being implemented with the technical support of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the financial assistance of the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO).

"The development of the laboratory network is crucial for improving the production quality in manufacturing and increasing the export of Georgian products. The activities carried out within the project will allow us to develop the laboratory system further. The Georgian entrepreneur will have an opportunity to receive comprehensive laboratory services. We wish to underline once again the success of the implemented project and thank the initiators of the project, donors and all involved parties who were able to establish the respective system. We need to prove that Georgia can produce quality products, adopt a full chain control system and simultaneously deliver healthy Georgian food products worldwide," said Mr. Khanishvili.

During the event, the participants summed up the activities implemented within the project; The parties presented future goals and discussed planned activities; they got acquainted with the strategic roadmap for sustainable laboratory infrastructure development in Georgia, which was created within the framework of the respective project. The roadmap covers all the issues and challenges faced by laboratories today. The strategic roadmap plays a crucial role in promoting the development of a unified policy for the Ministry and the private laboratories.

The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture is focused on strengthening the sector associations, accurately determining future development plans, and identifying core strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities by promoting state programs.

The representatives of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Agencies within the system of the Ministry, the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the Association of Georgian Laboratories (GeLab) and the pharmaceutical sector attended the meeting.



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Otar Shamugia: "We aim to receive better quality and quantity of the hazelnut harvest next year. The state hazelnut support program has this goal."



The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture Mr. Otar Shamugia meets hazelnut fruit farmers in the village of Aketi, Guria region.

During the meeting, the Minister spoke extensively about the programs implemented for agricultural development in the last ten years, noting that the state prioritizes

"The support for farmers is a priority for the state, regarding adopting new, modern technologies, increasing knowledge, and making equipment and financial resources accessible for farmers. All of those mentioned above have specific consequences. We have had tremendous production and export growth in recent years, and this trend continues.

The economic progress is evident in the country - we have had double-digit economic growth for the last two years, which allows us to attract additional resources from the budget to implement agricultural support programs for farmers and entrepreneurs. Programs will meet the needs of farmers. The hazelnut production support program has a similar purpose," said Otar Shamugia.

During the meeting, the Minister also spoke about the state program for the fight against the Asian stink bug and noted that the government had allocated significant funding - and will spend GEL 30 million for the fight against the pest next year.

According to the Minister, the government also discussed measures to support large businesses. By the decision, the state allows entrepreneurs to engage in the preferential agro-credit project and take advantage of the preferential agricultural loan for hazelnut maintenance.

"We export more than 70% of hazelnuts to the EU market. More than 100 companies are exporting hazelnut fruit to other countries. The state programs enabled entrepreneurs to establish more than 22 hazelnut drying and processing enterprises across

Therefore, it makes no sense to speak about a monopoly, which, unfortunately, we often hear. We admit that some factors (firstly, the quality) affect the price of hazelnuts. Also, there are circumstances related to the demand for hazelnuts in the export market;

This year, due to various factors, the price of hazelnuts was low. Therefore, we decided to provide support, to improve crop quality and increase income," said Mr. Otar Shamugia.

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Georgia prepares legislative changes to regulate inert waste management



The Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture Mr. Solomon Pavliashvili, attended the presentation on the Thematic Inquiry Report on "Inert Waste Management in Georgia" prepared by the Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Committee.

During the event, the participants highlighted the main challenges in inert waste management in Georgia, recommendations for promoting the sustainable management of inert waste and the development of legislative changes intended to regulate inert waste management in the country.

"The Ministry has been working on this area for a long time. We have already outlined inert waste management as the particular objective and included it in our National Waste Management Plan and National Strategy for 2020-2030 to determine how to carry out inert waste monitoring, registration, and management. We are glad that the Committee has held the thematic inquiry report. Moreover, the Ministry is actively involved in the respective process, and we will continue cooperating on this issue to get a positive result. Inert waste has the highest standard of circularity. Thus, recycling the waste and supporting the sector that recycles and converts inert wastes into new products will be helpful. This is an inter-sectoral issue and not the prerogative of any branch", said the Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Solomon Pavliashvili.

According to Mrs. Maia Bitadze, Chair of the Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Committee of the parliament, sustainable management of inert waste is crucial for the country.

'As we are all aware, in 2015, Georgia adopted the Waste Management Code, which means that already in 2015, we had a vision for the future regulation of this critical direction - inert wastes. Today, inert wastes are recognized worldwide as one of the critical resources that may be recycled and returned to economic circulation. Therefore, we started preparing legislative changes." Mrs. Maia Bitadze noted.

The representatives of the Parliament of Georgia, the government, international organizations, the diplomatic corps, and the civil and business sector attended the event.

The Presentation on the Thematic Inquiry Report on "Inert Waste Management in Georgia" was developed in close coordination between the Parliament of Georgia and the Government of Georgia, with the support of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Sweden.

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Geneva hosted the 12th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the "Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents" of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe



During the High-Level conference, the Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture Mr. Solomon Pavliashvili presented a report on the effective risk management of industrial accidents triggered by natural hazards and assessed the achievements and challenges in the environmental field of Georgia.

Within the framework of the official visit to Geneva, the Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture held a meeting with the representatives of the Secretariat of the Convention on "Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents" and the United Nations Economic Council.

The parties agreed to implement the technical mission in Georgia before starting

preparation activities for the ratification of the Convention. The process mentioned above includes a correct assessment of the current situation in the country. Moreover, in close cooperation with the Secretariat of the Convention and the UN Economic Council, the Georgian side will plan and carry out specific measures that will contribute to the ratification process of the Convention.



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Within the framework of the "EU4Environment Water Resources and Environmental Data" Programme, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture organized the 9th meeting of the National Policy Dialogue on Water



The Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili attended the meeting.

"The Government of Georgia has taken important steps to get closer to the EU Water Resources Management Policy. We started enhancing the capacities of the National Environmental Agency for conducting research on the quantitative and qualitative indicators of water resources in the entire territory of Georgia.

Moreover, with the support of the European Union, we have developed a national program, which helps us to ensure the monitoring of quantitative and qualitative indicators of water resources across the country.

The National Environmental Agency cooperates with the environmental sector specialists, and our financing is annually increasing, thus enabling the state the effective implementation and enforcement of Water Law. " said the Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili.

It is worth mentioning, that Georgia is undertaking a major reform of its water sector to comply with the European Union Water Framework Directive (WFD) requirements. In this regard, the Draft Law on Water Resources developed by Georgia with EU support is a key element to pursue reforms in the water sector and ensure sustainable and qualitative water resources for all.

Mr. Alexander Darras, EU Delegation to Georgia stated " EU is providing extensive support to the water sector in Georgia. We strongly encourage Georgia to continue the legislative, institutional, and governance reforms required to fully operationalize River Basin Management and to adopt as soon as possible the new Law on Water Resources which was prepared with EU assistance."

The workshop on nature-based solutions in the water sector took place after the conclusion of the national policy dialogue.

The meeting was attended by the representatives of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructures, Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons, Labor, Health and Social Affairs, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, Institutes, and NGOs, also Representatives of the EU Delegation to Georgia and international organizations and donors working in the Georgian water sector.

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Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Nino Thandilashvili delivered a speech at the conference dedicated to climate change and gender issues





The conference aimed to raise awareness of climate change and gender issues in Georgia and encourage dialogue among stakeholders on integrating gender issues into the national climate change policy.

"Climate change is becoming a part of everyday life. The negative consequences that climate change can bring to us are obvious. As a member of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFC-CC), Georgia recognizes the importance of equal inclusion of women and men in developing and implementing national climate policies. Georgia is one of the first countries to include gender aspects in the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) document of Georgia, clearly recognizing and emphasizing the importance of women's activation in the process of climate change policy planning and decision-making," said Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili.

The climate change and gender conference was hosted by the Ministry of Environment and Agriculture of Georgia with the support of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the Regional Environmental Center of the Caucasus (REC Caucasus). In parallel to the conference, the "Climate Change and Art Exhibition 2022" was organized by GIZ's Regional Programme for Capacity Development for Climate Policy in the Countries of Southeast, and Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia, Phase III (CDCPIII), commissioned by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK) within the framework of the International Climate Initiative (IKI).

During the conference, works created by the students of Tbilisi State Academy of Art on the topics of climate change and gender were exhibited.

The conference was attended by representatives of the government, non-governmental and international organizations, civil society, universities and experts in the field of climate change and gender.

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Newsletter









Swiss Agency for Development

ENABLING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GEORGIA'S FOREST **SECTOR REFORM -**

ECO.Georgia



"He that plants trees loves others besides himself." —Thomas Fuller

PROJECT BRIEF

The project "Enabling the implementation of Georgia's forest sector reform - ECO. Georgia" is jointly implemented by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture together with the National Forestry Agency, Rural Development Agency, Environmental Information and Education Centre, Department of Environmental Supervision; by the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). The project aims to mitigate GHG emissions through the nature-based management of the country's forests and the improvement of energy efficiency to reduce the demand for fuelwood. It also envisages the strengthening of local self-governance and diversifying livelihood opportunities in the forest adjoining rural communities to benefit from diversified income opportunities through improved forestry value chains and better access to forestry knowledge and skills. The project focuses on three target regions (Guria, Kakheti and Mtskheta-Mtianeti) and eight municipalities: Ozurgeti, Chokhatauri, Lanchkhuti, Telavi, Kvareli, Akhmeta, Dedoplistskaro and Tianeti. The Project is funded by the Green Climate Fund (GCF), Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Government of Georgia (GoG) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).



Component 1: **Sustainable Forest Management (SFM)**

Activity 1.1: Development and implementation of SFM plans

Activity 1.2: Strengthening of forest supervision

Activity 1.3:

Provision of sustainably produced fuelwood by NFA

Activity 1.4: Enhancement of enabling environment for the nation-wide implementation of sustainable forest management (SFM)

Activity 1.5: Improvement of monitoring and measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) systems for the forest sector



Component 2:

Market Development for Energy Efficiency (EE) and Alternative Fuels (AF)

Activity 2.1: EE-AF supply chain development

Activity 2.2: Implementing consumer financing instruments for EE-AF solutions

Activity 2.3: Creating consumer awareness and provision of technical advisory services for fuelwood users

Activity 2.4: Enabling policies and regulations



Component 3:

Livelihood opportunities and local self-governance in forest management

Activity 3.1:

Development and introduction of municipal-level tools, practices, plans and necessary capacities for participatory SFM and conservation

Activity 3.2: Development, testing and promotion of mechanisms at the local level to better protect interests of adversely affected stakeholders

Activity 3.3:

Development of professional skills and knowledge relevant to SFM and conservation through vocational education and international partnerships with centers of knowledge

Activity 3.4:

Strengthening of selected value chains (e.g., timber, NTFP, parts of eco-tourism)

Activity in 3 target regions only

Nation-wide activity

Nation-wide activity with focus on 3 target regions











Strengthening the value chains of timber and non-timber forest products in Georgia



Within the frames of the ECO.Georgia project, several studies on forest-related value chains and eco-tourism have been implemented with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The existing results of ongoing and completed research were discussed at the workshop organized under the National Forestry Program (NFP) on 5th December 2022.

In addition, the participants introduced the capacity assessment results of vocational and educational institutions and the use of Forest Ecosystem Services (FES) to the representatives of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture and its agencies, as well as to the NGOs, private sector and associations attending the event. The surveys were carried out at the regional level.

The aforementioned studies will contribute to determining the information and knowledge needs of the potential beneficiaries which will be addressed through the SMEs and household capacity building and support measures within the ECO.Georgia project.

The Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, the Head of the biodiversity and forest department, the Deputy Head of the National Forestry Agency, the Project Director, and the representatives ECO. Georgia, together with the NGO sector, associations, and private companies' representatives, attended the event.

The parties expressed their interest and gratitude towards the carried-out work and emphasized its importance as significant milestone to enable the implementation of Forest Sector Reform in Georgia.





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Strengthening the capacity of the Environmental Supervision Department of MEPA



To strengthen the staff capacity of the Department of Environmental Supervision (DES) series of training have been conducted within the frames of the ECO.Georgia

In total, the training covered 114 staff members - among them were 13 female participants - including forest inspectors of the department and urgent response employees. The participants were from the regional divisions and the central apparatus of the DES.

As for the topics of the sessions, the participants passed all the modules relevant to the required knowledge for the DES staff, including forest inspections and damage assessment in forest ecosystems.

The training took place in different rounds from June to December. The group of trainers of the DES facilitated the sessions.

Strengthening the capacity of the Environmental Supervision Department is one of the main activities to achieve the goal of the project - introducing sustainable forest management and the sustainable use of forest resources in the country.

