
Georgia ready for compromise with Russia - acting FM Bezhuashvili

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TBILISI, January 22 (RIA Novosti) - Georgia is ready for compromise with Russia, but not to the detriment of its national interests, the tiny ex-Soviet republic's acting foreign minister said on Tuesday.

"We believe diplomacy is impossible without compromises or concessions. No concessions or talks aimed at achieving a goal should be reached to the detriment of the national interests," Gela Bezhuashvili said.

He said his ministry would draft a document outlining Tbilisi's vision of further relations with Russia in the next two weeks.

"However, equality should be restored in relations first, that is, all obstacles, including embargos, should be removed, and borders opened," Bezhuashvili said.

Russia froze air links with the South Caucasus state in October 2006, following Tbilisi's brief arrest of Russian army officers on spying charges. Russian officials claimed the decision was based on the outstanding debt owed by Georgian airlines to Russia, but Georgia insisted the move was political.

Russia also cut off rail travel and mail links with its southern neighbor and withdrew its diplomats in 2006, but later moved to mend ties, returning its ambassador to Tbilisi and re-establishing postal links.

Russia's backing of the breakaway South Ossetia and Abkhazia has also concerned Georgian authorities, and President Mikheil Saakashvili, newly re-elected as president, has pledged to bring the republics back under the control of Tbilisi.

Bezhuashvili also said on Tuesday that Georgia would continue its integration into the European Union and NATO.

An overwhelming 77% of Georgians voted in favor of joining the NATO military alliance at a referendum on January 5.

Saakashvili said during his inauguration on January 20 that he favored neighborly relations with Russia and would like to rebuild bridges with Georgia's massive neighbor.
