

Farewell speech

Ambassador of Georgia to the Kingdom of the Netherlands (2010-2014) Shota Gvineria

Excellences, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

In May of 2010, I arrived in Schiphol airport and headed to 's-Gravenhage'. In an hour or so I was in my residence near Scheveningen, and next morning I went to the Embassy, which is located on Groot Hertoginnelaan. Later that day I went to the bank to open my account. When the lady asked my name and I said Gvineria - she replied – oh, what a difficult name!

Then I came back home and there was a neighbor with beautiful Dutch flowers welcoming us to the neighborhood.

This was my first experience in the Netherlands.

Since then I have always been fascinated by the open, direct, friendly and communicative way of working and living in this country.

The Netherlands is my first love, as 4 years ago I started my first Ambassadorial posting being the youngest Ambassador, when I was still 29.

Being as young and inexperienced for such an honorable mission, I realized that there was a lot to learn.

And I did learn a lot!

The way how Dutch organize things; do business, plan, evaluate, provide feedback is something that infected my personal and professional style forever.

Here I want to thank all my colleagues and friends who helped me to undertake the duties the way I did.

Not only were these 4 years pleasant, but also quite fruitful as well. There have been quite a few important initiatives undertaken, which we believe/or at least hope, has played a positive role in further strengthening the already existing ties between Georgia and The Netherlands at various levels.

One of my main challenges as the Ambassador of Georgia was the lack of awareness about my country.

Unfortunately, many Dutch people who don't have direct links with Georgia still have a stereotypic image of Georgia as a faraway former soviet republic. Not many are aware of the fact that Georgia ranked number 8 in ease of doing business survey last year and is nominated the top reformer in Europe for last few years by the World Bank.

This is why one of the priorities of the embassy is to enhance economic and cultural relations between the two countries, through bringing more information about Georgia to the Netherlands.

This is why I'm also particularly proud of the Netherlands Georgia Business Council, which we have founded with my friends over a year ago.

Jointly we have organized a number of significant economic and cultural projects, which has greatly contributed to the fact that The Netherlands is on top of the investors list in Georgia for last few years.

On June 27 Georgia is signing the **Association and Deep and comprehensive free Trade Area agreements** with the European Union.

I'm sure that this historic step will help Dutch and European companies to make even better use of the opportunities Georgia can offer and will contribute to achieving our ultimate foreign policy priorities – integration into the European and euro Atlantic structures.

Today we are celebrating **the Independence Day** of Georgia and I want to congratulate my country on achieving such a significant recognition of the progress made towards its irreversible Europeanization path.

Today is one of my final events in the Netherlands and I want to thank many people for their support for making today's program possible. Later on this afternoon we will have some Georgian polyphonic music, wines, with the history of 8000 years, and of course Georgian cuisine, kindly offered to us by the Georgian diaspora.

Thanks Natalia (Chaduneli)...

Tomorrow we have another Georgian event. Rotterdam photo museum is hosting the exhibition of the famous Georgian photographer – Dmitry Ermakov.

I'm much honored, **and I feel lucky**, that this event will be the final accord of my tenure. Therefore, I want to extend special thanks to the foundation Horizon, firstly, for saving this exceptional photos for the generations to come, and secondly, for the special role in organizing both events.

Thanks to our sponsors: TBC bank, Chateau Mukhrani and Bob Meijer in particular, NGBC and our honorary consuls: Nico de Borst and Gijs de Jager, true friends of Georgia...

Thanks to the management of this castle for providing such a beautiful venue and especially for their flexibility and **understanding**.

Talking about understanding - Thanks to my "dream team", embassy staff for being so proactive and efficient in tackling all the challenges we faced in implementing Georgian agenda in the Netherlands - especially given **very limited resources** of the embassy

Special thanks to my **spouse, Natalia** for supporting me on the ground and being actively involved in promoting Georgia in the Netherlands.

One of the best examples of her positive involvement is the **Georgian Chair in Languages, culture and society** studies in Leiden University.

I'm especially proud of leaving this chair behind as one of the major achievements and as another **efficient link and source of information sharing** between the Dutch and Georgian societies.

Thanks to all of you for being with us especially today, few hours away from the first world cup game for the Dutch team. I sincerely wish orange team a revenge ... I don't see my Spanish colleague here

And finally thanks to the Netherlands and the Dutch people for all the love we are taking back with us

Now I guess it's the time for the farewell... Doing this on Friday the 13th is another great reason to come back!

I say no farewell ... nakhvamdis, which means see you later, **TOT ZIENS**