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I would like to make a brief overview of the reforms which were recently implemented at the Prosecutor’s Office of Georgia and aimed to ensure its institutional independence. When carrying out these reforms, the recommendations of the Venice Commission, GRECO, the EU and OECD were taken into account. I will try to highlight some relatively important reforms, which increased the independence, effectiveness and transparency of the Prosecutor’s Office of Georgia.

In the beginning, I would like to draw your attention to the legislative reforms of the recent years based on which the Prosecutor’s Office of Georgia was fully separated from the Executive branch. It became accountable only to the Parliament of Georgia and its independence was guaranteed by the Constitution of Georgia.

In addition to this, legislative amendments also introduced new rules for electing the Prosecutor General in a more transparent manner. More precisely, unlike previous procedure, when the high ranking representatives of the Executive branch were involved in the selection process of the Prosecutor General, now the Prosecutorial Council, which is composed of prosecutors, Members of the Parliament, the Ministry of Justice, courts and academia plays a key role in the selection of the candidacy of the Prosecutor General. Later on, the selected candidacy is proposed to the Parliament of Georgia for final approval. The Prosecutorial Council was also empowered to prepare recommendations related to the main areas of the activities of the Prosecutor’s Office and submit them to the Prosecutor General. The Prosecutor General also has an obligation to submit to the Prosecutorial Council a report on the basic activities and priority areas of the Prosecutor’s Office.

The Prosecutor’s Office of Georgia also took significant steps for the establishment of transparent rules for the appointment and promotion of prosecutors and investigators, as well as their career development. To this end, evaluation system and ranking system of employees were implemented at the Prosecutor’s Office which rely on objective criteria and serve as definitive for the prosecutors’ career advancements. On his part, the Prosecutor General, when making decisions on career advancement of prosecutors and investigators, always takes into account the recommendations of the collegial bodies specially created for this purpose at the Prosecutor’s Office. In addition to this, the Prosecutor’s Office also established other collegial bodies working on the matters such as ethics, strategic development and criminal justice policy.

During the recent years, significant reforms aiming to improve the quality and effectiveness of prosecutorial activities were also implemented. It was reflected in permanent training and specializing of prosecutors in hate crimes, as well as creating guidelines corresponding to international standards.

Keeping joint statistics on hate crimes has always been a challenge in the past. However, last year the Prosecutor’s Office of Georgia signed MoU with the Supreme Court of Georgia and the Ministry of Interior. The purpose of the memorandum is to create and maintain joint, comprehensive and transparent hate crime statistics and prepare a joint report to this end.

With the support of the Council of Europe, policy guidelines regarding the investigation and prosecution of hate crimes were also prepared for prosecutors. As a result, prosecutors can now easily identify hate motives in criminal cases. For instance, for the last for years, criminal prosecution for hate crime has been initiated against 646 persons.

Last year, a recommendation for prosecutors regarding the effective investigation of the crimes committed against human rights defenders and the respective procedural guidance were also prepared.

The Prosecutor’s Office also implemented a victim-oriented supportive approach, which implies the involvement of witness and victim coordinators in criminal proceedings.

At the end of my presentation, I would also like to respond to the questions raised by the United States with respect to the status of Mukhtarli case and disparity of prosecutions with respect to June 2019 events. In the first case, the investigation is in an active phase. Georgia was able to interview Afgan Mukhtarli immediately after his release from prison and travel to Germany. Besides, mutual legal assistance request has been sent to Azerbaijan, as well as additional witnesses were interviewed and are still being interviewed. As for the events of June, 2019, the investigation is also ongoing. Due to the high mobility and the huge number of demonstrators, the majority of them cannot provide investigation even with the minimum information necessary for identifying the locations where they got injuries, as well as the law-enforcement officers who participated in these events. Therefore, identification of other alleged perpetrators requires special efforts, additional time and resources. Despite this, the Prosecutor’s Office of Georgia will do its best and make every effort to timely finalize both investigations and bring those responsible to justice.

Thank you very much for your attention.