

SAKASHVILLI RE-ELECTED PRESIDENT ♦ A TURNING POINT FOR DEMOCRACY IN GEORGIA

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The President of the EPP, **Wilfried Martens**, congratulated today **Mikhail Saakashvili** for his re-election as President of Georgia. According to the central election commission, Saakashvili won about 52 percent of votes cast on Saturday, almost twice as many as his nearest challenger. Both the Council of Europe and the OSCE who monitored the elections, declared that despite some voting violations, elections were essentially free and fair and the result was a true expression of Georgians' will.

"The elections of January 5 were very positive for Georgia because they ended convincingly the political crisis of recent months. In Georgia's first truly competitive presidential elections, Mikhail Saakashvili received the support of the majority of the Georgian citizens in order to expand democratic reforms and to reinforce his country's Euro-Atlantic orientation", stated President Martens.

"I expect these elections to be a turning-point for democracy in Georgia – as stated by the Slovenian Presidency of the European Union, I sincerely hope that Georgia will continue to improve the independence of state institutions for the forthcoming parliamentary elections and strengthen the freedom and pluralism of the media, as well as the independence of the judiciary," Martens concluded.

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