1. Country and Sector Background

Georgia is a small country located to the south of the Caucasus mountain range, with Russia to the north, Armenia and Turkey to the south, Azerbaijan to the east, and the Black Sea to the west. It has a population of 4.5 million. Following independence in 1991, the loss of planned production to Soviet markets, the end of large budget transfers from Moscow, and the impact of civil war and ethnic conflicts which displaced some 300,000 people, resulted in a 70 percent drop in output. The official GDP in 2000 was only 30-35% of its 1990 level\(^1\). GDP and gross national income (GNI) per capita have improved in recent years. However, its GNI per capita of US$ 1,310 in 2005 is still one of lowest among lower middle-income countries.

The Rose Revolution was a defining moment for Georgia. Although a range of political and economic reforms were implemented following independence in 1991, the situation quickly worsened afterwards. By the early 2000s, power had fragmented among competing groups; law and order had deteriorated; corruption was widespread; public salaries, pensions, and social transfers were in arrears; and the political will for reforms had slackened. The Rose Revolution brought in office a government of young reformers who quickly embarked on an ambitious program to stabilize the economy, curb corruption, and advance social and economic reforms.

Accomplishments from the Rose Revolution agenda are already substantial. In the public sector, salaries and pensions are paid on time and arrears have been cleared. Public employee

\(^1\) Although the (large) shadow economy was estimated to be up to 33% of GDP.
salaries have increased significantly. For instance, the salaries of in the Road Department of the Ministry of Economic Development (RDMED) have increased substantially and are now more or less on par with the salary level in the private sector. For the private sector, the regulatory and administrative environment facing business has improved significantly\(^2\). Reforms in police and tax administration have had strong and lasting impacts. In the education sector, reforms are introducing sweeping changes at all levels in the Georgian school system\(^3\).

**Georgia’s current prudent macroeconomic policies and structural reform programs are expected to bolster its growth prospects.** After difficult times in the aftermath of the Russian financial crisis in 1998, Georgia’s growth rates rebounded in 2001, with the oil transit industry, communications, financial services, and trade driving the average annual GDP growth to 6.8 percent between 2001 and 2004. Economic performance following the advent of the new government has been encouraging. GDP growth has been robust with 9.5% in 2005 and is estimated to grow by 7.5 % in 2006 and by 7.0% for 2007 onwards. Tax revenues as a percentage of GDP have more than trebled since 2004. The government acknowledges that the sustainability of these economic growth rates will require the deepening of the integration of Georgia with world markets. To that end, the Government has identified as a key priority the modernization and improvement of its transport infrastructure. Reforms engaged in 2004 and anti-corruption efforts along with investments in infrastructure and improvements in the regulatory environment, are expected to enhance private sector growth. In the medium-term, the spill-over effects of oil and gas pipeline construction (Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan, BTC) will help sustain Georgia's growth. In the longer term, expected sources of growth include agro-processing and small manufacturing, tourism, transit trade activities, and mineral extraction and processing.

**Georgia enjoys a strategic location yet to be capitalized.** Georgia is located on the shortest route between Europe and Azerbaijan, Armenia and the Central Asian Republics through its Black Sea ports. It also links Russia and Turkey. Trade with neighboring countries, both transit and bilateral, is thus an important feature of the economy. Trade is the second largest sector of the economy, accounting for 13 percent of GDP and 11 percent of employment, while both imports and exports have increased by more than 30% per annum in 2004 and 2005. Based on the success of the BTC, improving conditions in Georgia, and resolution of the Adjara conflict, new trade and energy routes are opening up across the region. These new trade and energy routes are relevant to Georgia both for transit income as well as to get Georgian goods to a larger market than otherwise would be possible. Increasing revenue from oil exports in Central Asia and the Caucasus is likely to increase the demand for consumer and industrial goods. Azerbaijan’s goal of becoming a regional logistical and consolidation center may also lead to additional transit flows.

**A range of natural endowments offer strong potential for labor-intensive export oriented growth as well as tourism activities provided the provision of adequate infrastructure enables**

\(^2\) The World Bank’s 2007 Doing Business Report rated Georgia as the country with the most improved business climate in the world. Similar results were noted in the EBRD/World Bank 2005 Business Environment and Enterprise Performance survey.

\(^3\) For instance, students are now admitted to colleges and universities on the basis of standardized national exams, introducing fairness in the admission process.
them to develop. Georgia has attributes that could lead to growth in export-oriented activities which would increase employment and broaden asset-ownership. Georgia has a comparatively open trade regime. The country benefits from an educated, inexpensive labor force and it also has a long tradition of entrepreneurship. Fertile land and favorable climates enable the production of diverse agricultural produces. Georgia’s scenic mountain regions, the Black Sea beaches, and rich historical and cultural heritage offer strong tourist potential. With the improving law and order, rising incomes in the region, and greater interregional connectivity through the transit corridor, Georgia has an opportunity to revive its tourist industry for the CIS market as well as niche markets in Europe and the Far East.

Despite this new momentum from the Rose Revolution, Georgia is nonetheless still recovering from the end of the Soviet era. GDP fell sharply after independence. Agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism, Georgia’s major sources of exports and employment in the Soviet period, have made only modest recoveries. The legacy of 70 years of command economy is challenging to overcome: rigged and informal business rules as well a deep public distrust remain difficult to change. Georgia’s relationship with Russia is strained. This has repercussion in the export of its agricultural goods and the import of gas and power.

Reducing poverty is an important challenge during this transitory period. Poverty levels remain high and have increased in rural areas despite economic growth because agriculture in terms of total output is still the largest sector, coming before trade, manufacturing, transport and communication. From 1994 to 2005, GNI per capita rose from US$480 to US$1,310 yet overall poverty has remained high. About 34.6 percent of the population is living in poverty. The situation has worsened particularly in rural areas because of the very low integration of the population in the national economy and the over-employment in agricultural activities (52% of employment for 16% of GDP). These two factors underpin this deterioration of living standards.

Transport Sector and its Impact on the Georgian Economy

The physical location of Georgia makes it a key transport link on the most direct route between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, and the Central Asian countries. It is situated on the historic “Silk Road”, which the current TRACECA initiative (TRAnsport Corridor Europe to Central Asia) seeks to emulate. The transport sector is one of the fastest growing in the Georgian economy: Transport and communication have tripled their contribution to the total output, from 4.6 percent of GDP in 1996 to 15 percent in 2005. In physical terms the movement of goods by land modes has also nearly trebled over the same period from 2.3 billion ton-kilometers to 6.8 billion. Nevertheless, in terms of ton-kilometers, total land transport movement only amounts to about one third of the levels in 1990, a reflection of the civil war in 1991/92 and the problems associated with the breakup of the former Soviet Union. The transport infrastructure remains deficient, and hinders growth in other sectors, including agriculture. The transport infrastructure

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4 Georgia has a comparative advantage in export-oriented agro-processing areas, such as wine, hazelnut, and fruit and vegetable processing, which are significant potential sources of employment as well as market growth for farm products. Dense forests cover one third of the country and good potential for labor intensive export-oriented wood processing exists, if a sustainable forestry regime can be developed. Georgia also has numerous mineral resources that promise some employment creation.
has to improve if Georgia wants to benefit from its strategic transit location, to support its recovering economy, and to integrate its whole population to the national economy.

**Poor infrastructure and cumbersome processes inhibit Georgia from fully exploiting its transit economy potential.** The transit sector is presently dominated by oil product transport, which represents about three times the volume of non-oil transport\(^5\). Non-oil trade mostly comprises Armenian and Azeri trade goods, which account for a significant share of the turnover of Georgia’s ports: Georgia has not yet been able to realize the transit potential from Central Asian countries. Despite being the closest maritime gateway to nearly all Central Asian countries, the Georgian route presently accounts for a negligible portion of the foreign trade of these countries. Long transit times, poor road conditions, multiple borders that have to be crossed, and the number of times cargoes need to be handled, together with the formal and informal payments and delays, explain the limited use of the Caucasus route. The high gasoline cost and the significant reduction in corruption in the Georgia should improve Georgia’s transit competitiveness.

**Limited transport infrastructure adds to the cost of doing business and leaves much of the population out of the national economy.** Constraints in infrastructure add to the cost of doing business, deter foreign investment, add time and costs to the transit corridor, and leave large segments of the population out of mainstream economic activities. Analyses show a close correlation between poverty in rural households and the extent to which they are linked to markets. Poor transport infrastructure partly explains why almost two thirds of rural household agricultural production is for self-subsistence and that about 20 percent of rural households do not trade at all. Poor connectivity has also contributed to the weak linkages between farmers and agro-processors as few intermediate agents, wholesalers, or farmer-based organizations exist. A Bank study indicated that local road and bridge rehabilitation projects generate clear economic benefits at the community level, decreasing the importance of barter trade and increasing the number of small and medium enterprises.

**Government’s transport strategy is to support market integration.** The Government transport sector strategy is to develop the infrastructure and institutional setting of the sector to support market integration and to maximize the country’s potential as a transit economy. To that end, the country’s main ports and airports are being concessioned to the private sector, the railways are moving towards the development of profit centers and the adoption of modern marketing techniques, customs are being reformed to improve trade facilitation and reduce corruption, a decentralization process is under way to devolve local infrastructure to local governments, and a massive effort is being made, with the support of the international financial community, to upgrade the road network and reduce travel costs. The sector agenda includes major challenges, among which: (i) the legal and regulatory framework of the sector has to be overhauled to incorporate the right balance in the interface of the private and the public sectors, ensuring fair competition, safety and attention to environmental concerns; (ii) institutions have to be strengthened to fulfill their policy making, monitoring and executing roles; (iii) the decentralization

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\(^5\) The railways have the higher modal share in ton-km terms (89 per cent), the greater total tonnage is hauled by road transport (26.9 million tones vs. 18.9 million by rail). This suggests that the average trip length of road haulage is less than a tenth of that by rail, reflecting the dominance of the railways on the international transport of oil, which accounts for more than three-fourth of Georgia’s trade. Passenger transport is predominantly by means of road transport with 267 million person trips as against 3.6 million by rail.
process will require careful implementation to ensure that local authorities acquire the technical and financial resources necessary to deal with their new obligations; and (iv) as road investments move from the more obvious works on the heavily transited international arterial roads towards the preservation of these assets and the upgrading of the secondary network, it becomes imperative to have in place the capabilities for efficient road management based on modern information systems.

**Road Sector.**

Georgia’s roads consist of international motorways (1,495 kilometers), state highways (3,354 kilometers), and local roads (15,480 kilometers). The poor condition of much of the network in Georgia, caused by a lack of investment and maintenance, represents a significant barrier to growth. Roads in Georgia often lack shoulder markings and centerlines, increasing the risk of accidents, which in 2005 amounted to 1164, with 259 deaths and 1492 injured representing a fatality rate of 10 per 10,000 vehicles among the worst of eastern European countries.

Road funding for the upgrading and modernization of the main international arteries of the country is being supported by multilateral and bilateral organizations. There are five main roads and highways in Georgia, totaling 859 km. These are: (i) Poti–Tbilisi–Red Bridge (E60); (ii) Mtskheta–Kazbegi–Larsi; (iii) Sarpi–Batumi–Samtredia; (iv) Khashuri–Akhaltsikhe–Turkish border; and (v) Tbilisi–Marneuli–Guguti. The often rough topography, the low-capacity highways (often only 7 meter wide without shoulders), the inadequate maintenance regime, the poor road condition, the poor technical standards of vehicles, and other adverse conditions mean the traffic flow is slow and the risk of accident is high.

The development of oil resources is projected to increase the east-west flow of oil and associated products and the rising wealth and increasing economic activities of the Caucasian and Central Asian countries will increase the flow of goods. The Government is putting a strong emphasis on the upgrade of the East-West (E60) highway. This effort to upgrade the east-west transit corridor began during the 1990’s as a part of the EU-funded TRACECA initiative. The TRACECA project financed a pre-feasibility study for an upgrade to four lanes of the highway from the port of Poti on the Black sea to the Azeri border. A PPIAF-funded study reviewed various alignment alternatives and financing options for the most traveled sections between Tbilisi and Rikoti. The Georgian Government started the upgrade of the first 15 km of the East-West Highway (E60) from outside of Tbilisi at Natakhtari to Agaiani (Km 43 mark) from its own budget. The proposed project will continue the upgrade from Agaiani (approximately Km 43 mark) to Igoeti (at the Km 56 mark).

The main responsibility of the network is under the RDMED, the main recipient of the institutional reforms funded under previous IDA Credits. There has been substantial progress on

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6 It is worth noting that the construction of this four lane highway was already envisioned in the 1980s under Soviet days. Some of earth works were already started but activities were interrupted when Georgia became independent.

7 RDMED was previously the State Department of Roads of Georgia (SDRG), an autonomous agency.

8 Two IDA credits over the past eight years have started to improve the international network and an ongoing credit is focusing on Secondary and Local roads. A fourth small Credit helped restructure the Ministry of Transport and Communications, now renamed with an expanded scope as Ministry of Economic Development (MED).
some specific issues, such as the reduction of reliance on inefficient and costly Soviet era design and construction standards, the introduction of modern planning and programming techniques, an increased awareness on safety and environmental issues in road design and construction, the introduction of internationally acceptable procurement rules, the development of a more competitive local construction industry, and the introduction of a framework for the involvement of local communities in the planning and development of roads. Furthermore, the previous projects helped to develop a detailed road map for the continuation of the institutional improvements. One of the government’s main priorities in the sector is to have in place an adequate system for planning, programming, funding and implementing road maintenance to ensure the sustainability of the ongoing investments. Budgetary allocations for roads have increased dramatically in the last few years, from about 32 million GEL in 2000, to 67 million GEL in 2004 and 126 million GEL in 2005. The Georgian government is focusing not only on increasing the quantity of funding but also on securing the quality and transparency of the expenditures. The Government’s ambitious road investment program, both in terms of physical and institutional targets, will require substantial enhancement of the present level of know-how in the sector

2. Objectives

The project development objectives are:

(i) to contribute to the gradual reduction of road transport costs and improve access, ease of transit, and safety along the central part of Georgia's East-West corridor, through upgrading a segment of the East-West Highway from Tbilisi to Rikoti; and,

(ii) to strengthen the capacity of the government, RDMED and the local road construction industry to plan and manage better the road network.

For road users, the project would lead to better road quality and level of serviceability, avoiding or deferring costly congestions expected on the basis of mid-term traffic projections, better road safety through new alignments and city bypasses, avoiding hazardous crossing of urban areas by heavy transit traffic, and savings derived from shorter travel times.

Key Indicators. Project performance would be assessed through a number of qualitative assessments and quantitative indicators. The specified indicators would be regularly monitored and evaluated by MoF, MoED, RDMED and TRRC. The proposed indicators to be used to assess project performance are detailed in Annex 3 and include:

Project Outcome Indicators
- Reduction in transit time/vehicle operating cost from Agaiani to Igoeti
- Planning is done on a multi-year basis using the RDB

Intermediate Outcome Indicators
- Number of km upgraded for Agaiani-Igoeti
- Agaiani-Igoeti built incorporating safety specifications
- RDB covers all network and in use
Multi year investment and maintenance program updated
Review and revision of technical manuals and teaching materials
Adoption of new technical standards and specifications for road pavements and new geometric design standards for road design
New technical standards and specifications for road pavements and new geometric design standards for road design are used
Revise human resource policies
An environmental team is set up within RDMED
A safety unit is set up within RDMED and it coordinates with the traffic police
A new transport (or road) concession law is developed

3. Rationale for Bank Involvement

This Credit will build upon the Bank’s past involvement and address some of the remaining policy and investment gaps in the road sector. The Government has decided to rehabilitate and reinforce the major transit corridor over the next 20 years for an overall estimated cost of approximately US$1.5 to US$2 billion. It has requested the Bank to take a leading role and a very significant share of this program, while other donors like ADB and EBRD are expected to contribute at a later stage.

Transport has been a Bank priority in Georgia since 1995. One of the first IDA credits was the US$12 million Transport Rehabilitation Project (FY96-99) under which over 50% of the proceeds were used in the road sector to fix the most urgent sections. It was followed by a US$40 million Roads Project (FY00-06) which financed basic repairs on the dilapidated main network. Last, and still under implementation, there is an on-going Secondary and Local Roads Project (FY04-10) which aims at addressing transport bottlenecks to rural development (US$20 million). All of these projects also contributed to the strengthening of the institutional capacity of the sector.

The Country Assistance Strategy Completion Report (for FY98-FY05) acknowledged the useful contribution of the Bank to Georgia road sector. At present the Bank is the leading development partner engaged in the road sector and therefore the CPS (FY06-09), describes IDA as the leader toward the development of the main highway network. The Bank has in depth of knowledge and broad experience in the sector in Georgia and world wide. The trust that results from this long involvement means that the Bank is in a good position to provide substantial assistance to the Government and RDMED. Development of the transit corridor in Georgia is also complemented by parallel investments along the same corridor in Azerbaijan, also supported by the Bank, as well as other donors.

4. Description

**Component 1: Upgrade of the Agaiani to Igoeti section of the E60 Highway from two lanes to four lanes:** This component comprises: (i) the civil works for the upgrade from 2 to 4 lanes of a 14-km section of the E60 highway from Agaiani to Igoeti including the rehabilitation of the
existing 2 lanes where necessary, and (ii) consultant services for the supervision of the works for this section. The widening of the highway will be mostly within the right of way already owned by RDMED. Very limited land acquisition (3 ha) is required for the construction of traffic interchanges. Land Acquisition would be financed solely by the Government.

**Component 2: Road Sector Institutional Development and Capacity Building:** This component comprises specialized consultancy studies, technical assistance, training, services, and equipment as needed to support the Government, RDMED and local road construction industry to strengthen their capacities. Discussions with entities such as the Ministry of Economic Development, RDMED, local contracting, design and construction companies have identified the following areas for the provision of technical assistance, equipment and software, and training:

(i) **Road Investment and Maintenance Planning.**
   - Technical assistance for the establishment of road data base and the integration of the data to the different management information systems.
   - Technical assistance and training for RDMED on the use of the HDM system, its calibration and the industry-wide dissemination of the HDM system.
   - Technical assistance to improve the contractual arrangements for road maintenance.

(ii) **Improving Road Sector Capacity**
   - Assistance to the Technical University.
   - Workshops and seminars to improve industry capacity.
   - Preparation of standards for design and bidding documents for rehabilitation, reconstruction and construction of roads.
   - Improving the effectiveness of RDMED staff through modern human resource management practices and capacity building.

(iii) **Environmental and road safety management**
   - Training to the new environmental unit in RDMED to integrate environmental and safety concerns in road management.

(iv) **Technical assistance to promote PPP transactions**
   - Support for concession supervision and legal advisory services.
   - Assistance on transport regulations such as the revision of regulation law and the revision of the maritime code.
   - Preparation of concession law for the transport sector.
   - Provision of trainings and seminars on PPP transactions.

**Project implementation:** the component will fund consultant services for TRRC\(^9\) and will comprise equipment and TA to support implementation of the project.

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\(^9\) TRRC’s assistance to RDMED is funded under the on-going Secondary and Local Roads Project (SLRP). The proposed project will supplement SLRP funding when necessary or for activities specific to the new project and not covered under SLRP.
5. Financing

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6. Implementation

The Credit Agreement will be established between the Bank and Georgia. The RDMED will have the overall responsibility for project implementation with the Transport Reform and Rehabilitation Center (TRRC) established in 1996 to assist in the implementation of the Bank-financed Transport-related project. The main function of the TRRC will be to provide support to RDMED in procurement, accounting, disbursements, financial reporting, auditing arrangements, project monitoring and evaluation and coordination with the World Bank and other financiers. The TRRC has experience in managing and implementing five IDA-financed transport or transport-related projects and has already established a successful track record in its implementation of these projects. In the Bank’s procurement assessment of Georgia in 2003, the procurement for the Bank transport projects was determined to be in accordance with Guidelines. The TRRC will work with both the Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank in the administration of the project account and with the Ministry of Economic Development and RDMED to implement this project. RDMED and TRRC have signed an implementation agreement spelling out their respective roles and responsibilities.

7. Sustainability

Project sustainability will largely depend on the Government’s (i) commitment to the improvement in the east-west transit corridor and the continued availability of resources, (ii) commitment to efficiency and institutional change and (iii) ability to attract meaningful private participation. The first concern is addressed by the high priority the Government has placed in developing the transport sector evidenced by the significant increase in budgetary support provided for the road sector from 67.8 million GEL in 2004, to 121.4 million GEL in 2005, 186 million GEL in 2006 and projected 215 million GEL in 2007. In addition, there should also be other donors funding to continue the highway improvements in the near future. In terms of efficiency and institutional change, there is danger of slippage and resistance to reform. The Rose Revolution marks a break with the past. The new Government has moved quickly and decisively on a number of fronts. However, the culture of doing business runs deep and cannot be changed overnight. Road investment involves substantial capital, civil works and local business. While the Bank-funded projects meet the Bank standards, other investments in the road sector might not be entirely efficient. To sustain continued transparency in road procurement, there could be benchmarking of investment and services, technical assistance in up to date technology and capacity building in modern day standards. Institutional change is one of the objectives of the proposed project and of the next two successive highway improvement projects. Through this series of projects, RDMED would incrementally be transformed into a modern government agency with monitoring and contracting expertise.
In view of the financing needs to modernize the sector, Georgia has to be able to attract substantial private participation in the near future in order to realize the improvement in the east-west corridor faster than the originally envisioned 15-20 years. The Government and the donor community may not have all the resources to implement the improvement and the subsequent maintenance within the next ten years without some private participation. Therefore, the project will also (to a lesser extent) help building capacity towards increasing private participation. The two successive projects will further develop PPP in the road sector in Georgia.

8. Lessons Learned from Past Operations in the Country/Sector

The important following lessons learned from the Bank’s experience in similar projects in the region and particularly from the previous road projects in Georgia have been incorporated into the design and preparation of the project:

**Network Management and Expenditure Policies.** The lack of a network management perspective often leads to the neglect and deterioration of entire portions of the highway network. As the more obvious investments in the trunk system are completed, expenditure policies need to incorporate a more balanced network approach. The project will aim to achieve further progress in network monitoring and analysis started under the previous projects, institutionalizing the use of expenditure optimization programs within actual resource constraints in order to effectively improve and maintain the condition of the entire network.

**Maintenance Policies.** Highway agencies worldwide, with few exceptions have demonstrated their inability to effectively manage the numerous activities, personnel and equipment required for maintaining a road network. Since the late 90s, the maintenance of Georgia’s road network was contracted out with some success, but the input-based forms of contract require extensive supervision from RDMED, a supervision task which is itself contracted out, RDMED indeed supervising the supervisors. The proposed project will (i) improve existing contracts and the ability of RDMED to supervise them; and (ii) experiment with long-term performance-based maintenance management contracts which are being successfully used in other developed and developing countries.

**Ensure client ownership of the institutional components.** The institutional components of projects have often fallen short of achieving their objectives. Local conditions, such as counterpart absorptive capacity and ownership have been important factors. But the scope and timetable of these components have often been over-optimistic. The institutional component of the proposed project focuses on very few essential issues. The component will be monitored against clear indicators and targets tailored to the expected phasing of road operations in Georgia. More importantly, it will also ensure that know-how transfers reach beyond the road administration, to academia and civil society.

**Avoid design changes and variations during construction.** Because the technical complexity of highway construction is often underestimated, many projects of this type experience substantial cost overruns and construction delays. To address these risks, RDMED is
implementing a phased approach to road construction, with each phase to be supported by an interactive process in designing alignment alternatives, assessing technical, environmental and social impacts and cross-validating design results with engineering firms and other experts. In addition, Former Soviet Union design standards often lead to oversized upfront investment. The proposed project addressed this risk by requiring modern European design standards to be applied where appropriate and benchmarking the investment against similar operations in similar countries.

9. Safeguard Policies (including public consultation)

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10. List of Factual Technical Documents

**A. Project Information Document, Concept Stage, January 2006**

**B. Bank Staff Assessment**

- Preparation Mission Aide-Mémoire, April 2006
- Pre-Appraisal Mission Aide Memoire, July 2006

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   The InfoShop

*By supporting the proposed project, the Bank does not intend to prejudice the final determination of the parties' claims on the disputed areas*