Paul Wolfowitz Address on the Occasion of Georgia’s Second Anniversary of the Rose Revolution

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by
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I am honored to join President Saakashvili and the people of Georgia in celebrating the second anniversary of the Rose Revolution. On behalf of the entire staff of the World Bank Group, let me extend my heartfelt congratulations.

Over the past two years the people of Georgia have shown extraordinary courage and dedication…in attacking corruption and starting to build a society based on the rule of law….in reducing bureaucracy and improving the business environment….and in working on the social and physical foundations for a prosperous and democratic Georgia. When a country sets its mind to change, it can move mountains. Georgia has also shown strong commitment to a peaceful resolution of regional conflicts.

That so much has changed in two short years is testimony to the firm determination of all Georgians. This was truly a revolution of all the people that drew its leaders and inspiration from citizens in all walks of life. One of those leaders is no longer with us. I would like to take this opportunity to honor the strength, vision and wisdom of Zurab Zhvania who led his Government through those difficult first months. Zurab would be proud of the fact that the promises of the revolution he helped launch are being kept.

Today we see evidence of these changes all around us. Businesses and citizens report significantly reduced corruption in various surveys. In fact, the 2006 “Doing Business” Survey -which grades countries on how much they have improved the business climate - shows Georgia had the second largest improvement in performance last year of any country in the world. Strong macro-economic and fiscal management has safeguarded the budget. Pensions and wages are paid on time. Sweeping education reforms are delivering benefits to thousands of students - and this year, admissions to universities was firmly based on merit. Finally, Georgia’s energy supply as we enter the winter season is more secure. Altogether, these reforms support solid economic growth.

Let us not only celebrate the remarkable progress of Georgia to date, but also use today to commit to redoubling efforts to restructure the economy…to create jobs and build hope for young people…and to improve the lives of the poor. The world is watching Georgia in this great endeavor. In transforming its own society, Georgia sets an example of leadership and vision for the region. Continuing gains will require all members of society to work together. I want to assure you that Georgia can count on the World Bank Group as a committed partner.

Thank you for inviting me to participate in this important occasion. I know that Georgian determination which shined so brightly in the Rose Revolution will continue to be a beacon supporting the Georgian ideals of freedom and prosperity. I wish you and your government every success in leading Georgia towards a prosperous and peaceful future for all of its citizens.