

აჭარის ავტონომიური რესპუბლიკის უმაღლესი საბჭო
Supreme Council of Autonomous Republic of Ajara

The Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara

SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF OPEN GOVERNANCE ACTION PLAN



ევროკავშირი
საქართველოსთვის
Project funded by the European Union



ინფორმაციის თავისუფლების
განვითარების ინსტიტუტი





The Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara

SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF OPEN GOVERNANCE ACTION PLAN

TABLE OF CONTENT

PREFACE	4
OVERVIEW	8
INTRODUCTION	12
ACTION PLAN PREPARATION, IMPLEMENTATION AND REPORTING PROCESS	14
Cooperation with Consultative Group and Plan Approval	17
Fulfilment of Open Governance Plan	19
Development of the Self-Assessment Report	19
FULFILMENT OF ACTION PLAN COMMITMENTS	20
COMMITMENT 1: Public Consultations in the Law-Making Process	22
COMMITMENT 2: Strengthening the Government Oversight in Collaboration with the Civil Society	24
COMMITMENT 3: Establishment of the Citizen Engagement Center of the Supreme Council of Ajara	26
COMMITMENT 4: Developing a System for Electronic and Written Petitions	29
COMMITMENT 5: Creation of Mechanism for Media Accreditation	32
COMMITMENT 6: Adapting the Website of the Supreme Council of Ajara to the Needs of Persons with Disabilities	34
COMMITMENT 7: Adapting the Building of the Supreme Council of Ajara According to the Needs of Persons with Disabilities	36

COMMITMENT 8: Increasing Accessibility of Information regarding Activities of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara for People with Hearing Impairments - Adaptation to Sign Language	38
COMMITMENT 9: Electronic System for Issuing a Pass to Enter the Building of the Supreme Council and Attend its Sessions	40
COMMITMENT 10: Internet Transmission of the Sessions of the Supreme Council of Ajara and Its Bodies and Citizen Engagement	44
COMMITMENT 11: Uploading Documents on the Website of the Supreme Council of Ajara in a Machine-Readable Format, Increasing the List of Information to be Published Proactively	47
COMMITMENT 12: Public Reports of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara, Its Bodies and Members	50
COMMITMENT 13: Developing and Publishing Committee Action Plans of the Supreme Council of Ajara	52
COMMITMENT 14: Open Door Day	54
COMMITMENT 15: CSO Day	56
COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS AND EXPERIENCE SHARING	58
CONCLUSION, OTHER INITIATIVES AND FUTURE STEPS	60

Two years ago, the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara (the SCA) initiated a significant process - the very first attempt to introduce systemic and fundamental changes for greater openness of the Supreme Council. Although by this moment the Council was already recognized as the most transparent institution in the region, we knew that more openness and readiness for changes were necessary, so that citizen engagement in the activities of the Supreme Council became real.

The first action plan of open governance was quite ambitious, its fulfilment seemed somewhat unrealistic, however, the Supreme Council, with its team and the help of many partners, achieved a very important result - 10 out of 15 obligations were fully or substantially completed and two obligations saw limited implementation. In some areas, we have made more progress further than planned in 2020. The Supreme Council was able to do all this against the background of severe crises - restrictions caused by the pandemic and political upheavals - which in itself had a heavy impact on our work.

We started the open governance process with extremely high engagement - more than 10 local organizations were involved in the process of developing the action plan. I would like to note with special pride that close cooperation with each of these organizations continued and with their help, as well as with the support of the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), we were able to achieve very important results. As a result, this whole process was positively evaluated by our partners and even our critics. The cycle of the Open Government Action Plan was closed with the foregoing report, which was developed through public consultations and cooperation with the civil sector in accordance with international standards. I would like to give special gratitude to the Institute for the Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI), which has followed through with the implementation of open governance principles in the Supreme Council since day one and continues to promote our success and showcase it internationally.

The Supreme Council, in cooperation with its partners and with their support, introduced a petition institute, developed a mechanism for commenting on draft laws, ensured that its website was made accessible to the highest standards, established a Citizen engagement Centre, prepared a concept for adapting the building to the latest national standards, made strategic planning an integral part of its activities, and created an inclusive citizen engagement portal with a number of digital services - chaerte.sca.ge. All this meant fundamental reforms within the Council, which were crowned with a renewed structure in 2022 when all these changes were made sustainable and irreversible.

Open governance, greater transparency and accountability of the legislative body are the democratic values that characterize true European societies. We are glad that we have made a small contribution to Georgia's European path and we believe that we will develop an even more ambitious, clear and strong plan for 2022-2024, thus we will be able to work actively with the public on important issues for our region and country.



DAVID GABAIDZE

*Chairperson of the Supreme Council of
the Autonomous Republic of Ajara*



Open governance is fundamental to democracy; it ensures that state responses to people's needs and aspirations take their views, opinions and concerns into account. Further, open governance ensures that decision-making leaves no one behind. As Georgia moves forward on the path towards parliamentary democracy, ensuring openness, transparency and accountability in law-making processes is more important than ever.

The United Nations Development Programme welcomes the efforts of the Supreme Council of the Ajara Autonomous Republic to integrate open governance principles into its operations and to assess how open and accessible its work is to citizens. We are proud to have supported the Supreme Council's implementation of its 'Openness Action Plan 2020-2021'. We are convinced that the release of this self-assessment report will lead to further steps towards achieving full legislative openness.

The Supreme Council of the Ajara Autonomous Republic has taken significant steps towards creating greater collaboration space with civil society and increasing its institutional accountability to the public. It introduced a range of tools, including opportunities for citizens to submit petitions and to use an online platform and a Citizen Engagement Centre. The impacts of this work were particularly visible during the pandemic, when open, transparent and efficient communication between the government and the public was crucial to the success of the crisis response.

With this auspicious start, the Supreme Council is on the path to achieving its ambitious openness targets. UNDP remains committed to supporting the Supreme Council of the Ajara Autonomous Republic and other Georgian institutions in their journey to open, inclusive and accountable governance.

NICK BERESFORD

UNDP Resident Representative in Georgia

For many years, the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) has supported the implementation of Open Government Partnership (OGP) principles at the executive, legislative, judicial and local government levels in Georgia. Since 2020, with the financial support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the European Union (EU), IDFI has been cooperating with the Supreme Council of Ajara, within the framework of the project «Consolidation of Parliamentary Democracy in Georgia.»

The Council actively worked to introduce the principles of Open Government Partnership at the institutional level. As a result of the change in the regulations of the Supreme Council of Ajara, a permanent body - the Open Governance Council - was created, as well as a consultative group composed of representatives of civil society and international organizations. The Open Governance Council and the Consultative Group jointly developed the 2020-2021 Open Governance Action Plan with 15 commitments aimed at increasing citizen engagement and access to information in the Supreme Council, strengthening accountability and introducing innovation and technology.

Despite the many challenges faced by the Supreme Council, a significant part of the commitments stipulated by the Action Plan were fulfilled within two years.

With the support of the European Union and UNDP, IDFI was actively involved in the implementation of the Action Plan. Among other activities, in active cooperation with the Supreme Council of Ajara and with the coordination by IDFI: the concepts were prepared for the Supreme Council web accessibility and the building accessibility for persons with disabilities; the website of the Supreme Council was adapted, and a citizen engagement website of the Supreme Council was created, where citizens have the opportunity to submit petitions and comments on draft laws electronically.

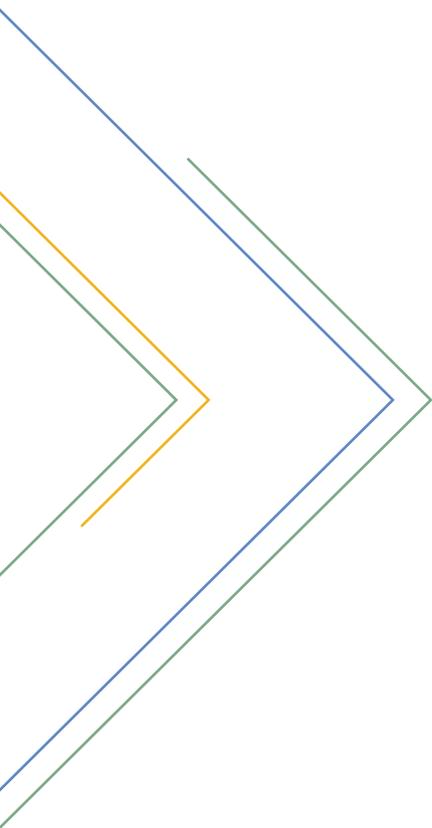
It should be noted that taking into account the significant successes and achievements of the Supreme Council, active consultations are currently underway with the Secretariat of the OGP. Their goal is to formally involve the Council in a new Open Government Partnership pilot program for local legislatures.

IDFI welcomes the activities of the Supreme Council to improve institutional sustainability and implement the Principles of Open Governance. The Council has already started working on the 2022-2024 Open Governance Action Plan, which should be prepared in active cooperation with the civil sector. This once again emphasizes that the Supreme Council is ready to become a more open, transparent, and accountable agency that will involve the public to a higher degree in its activities.

GIORGI KLDIASHVILI

*Executive Director of the Institute for
Development of Freedom of Information*





OVERVIEW

The Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara (hereinafter, the SCA) has been engaged in the Open Governance initiative since 2020 and launched the Institutional Openness reform during this period. As part of this process, the Open Governance Council was established, and on 14 August 2020, the 2020-2021 *Action Plan on Open Governance* was approved.

The preparation of the document was preceded by active communication with civil society and representatives of political groups of the Supreme Council. It is noteworthy that most of the commitments defined under the action plan responded to the initiatives of the civil sector. Although the document covered the period till the end of 2021, due to certain circumstances (such as the restrictions related to the pandemic outbreak, including the limitation of in-person working meetings with partners; the post-election situation in the region and across the country in 2020, pre-election period of 2021 self-government bodies), some of the activities could not be implemented in a timely manner. Accordingly, the implementation process was extended until the end of April 2022.

This report summarizes the development of the Action Plan, as well as its fulfilment and reporting processes. It corresponds with good practices of self-assessment, established by the Open Government Partnership (OGP) and is developed with extensive internal and external engagement. Representatives of the Supreme Council personnel, civil society and international organizations as well as the members of the Open Governance Council took part in the process.

The table below briefly summarizes the Open Governance 2020-2021 Action Plan of the Supreme Council of Ajara and its implementation.

General information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Supreme Council of Ajara started working on the Action Plan in 2020. ● As of now, one action plan has been approved. ● This plan includes 15 commitments. 	
Commitment focus	THE NUMBER OF COMMITMENTS CORRESPONDING WITH MAJOR PRINCIPLES OF OGP.	
	Transparency	12
	Accountability	12
	Citizen engagement	12
	Technology and innovation for openness and accountability	7
The general level of implementation of the commitments	COMMITMENT IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL: ¹	
	Completed	7 (47% of commitments)
	Substantially Completed	3 (20% of commitments)
	Limited Implementation	2 (13% of commitments)
	Not Started	3 (20% of commitments)

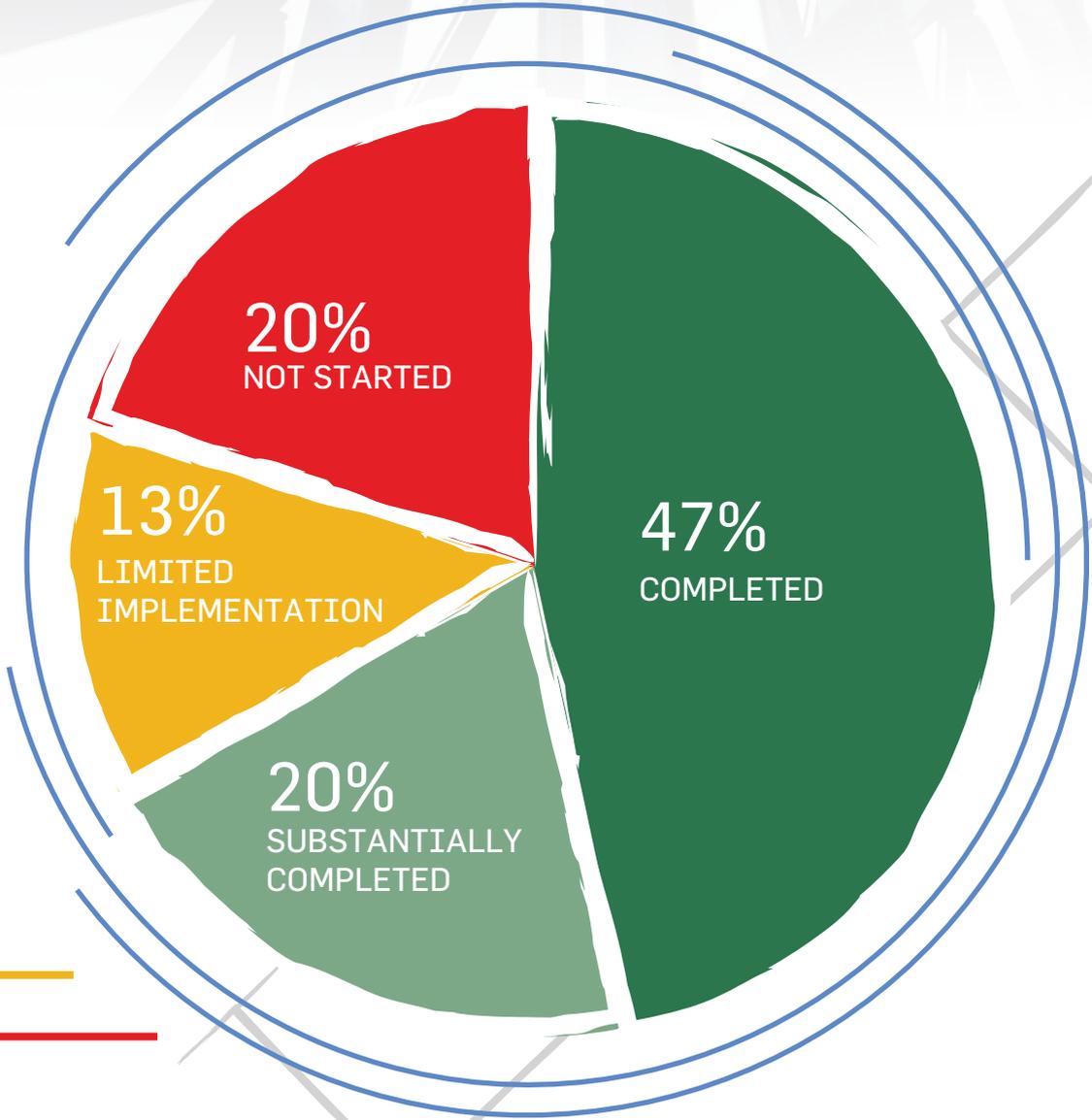
¹ Commitment is:

Completed, if all stages/indicators are achieved (100%).

Substantially Completed, if majority of stages/indicators are implemented (51%-99%).

Limited Implementation, if only half or less than half of the stages/indicators are implemented (1%-50%).

Not Started, if none of the stages/indicators are implemented (0%).



COMMITMENT 1: Public Consultations in the Law-Making Process	LIMITED IMPLEMENTATION
COMMITMENT 2: Improvement of Oversight of the Executive Government in Collaboration with the Civil Society	NOT STARTED
COMMITMENT 3: Establishment of the Citizen engagement Center of the Supreme Council of Ajara	COMPLETED
COMMITMENT 4: Development of a System for Electronic and Written Petitions	COMPLETED
COMMITMENT 5: Creation of a Mechanism for Media Accreditation	COMPLETED
COMMITMENT 6: Adaptation of the Website of the Supreme Council of Ajara to the Needs of Persons with Disabilities	COMPLETED
COMMITMENT 7: Adaptation of the Building of the Supreme Council of Ajara to the Needs of Persons with Disabilities	COMPLETED
COMMITMENT 8: Increase of Accessibility of Information regarding Activities of the Supreme Council of Ajara for People with Hearing Impairments - Adaptation to Sign Language	SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETED
COMMITMENT 9: Electronic System for Issuing a Pass to Enter the Building of the Supreme Council of Ajara and Attend its Sessions	COMPLETED
COMMITMENT 10: Online Transmission of the Sessions of the Supreme Council of Ajara and Its Bodies and Citizen engagement	SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETED
COMMITMENT 11: Upload of Documents on the Website of the Supreme Council of Ajara in a Machine-Readable Format; Increasing the List of Information to be Published Proactively	SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETED
COMMITMENT 12: Public Reports of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara, Its Bodies and Members	LIMITED IMPLEMENTATION
COMMITMENT 13: Development and Publishing of Committee Action Plans of the Supreme Council of Ajara	COMPLETED
COMMITMENT 14: An Open Door Day	NOT STARTED
COMMITMENT 15: A CSO Day	NOT STARTED



INTRODUCTION

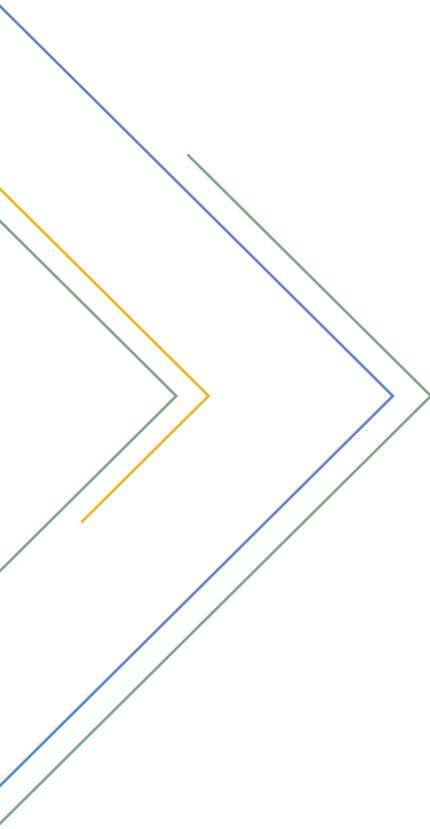
Open governance is essential to a democratic society. Information accessibility and citizen engagement in the decision-making process are a feature of a modern, progressive, and strong state. The Supreme Council of Ajara (SCA) has always been distinguished with its transparency and openness. However, through the implementation of open governance principles, SCA has initiated a major institutional reform that will facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships and the establishment of an effective public service structure.

Shortly after the decision on participation in the Open Governance Partnership initiative, a standing deliberative body – the Open Governance Council was established under the legislative body. The scope of authority and rules of conduct of the council are defined under the SCA Rules of Procedure, as well as by the Charter of the Open Governance Council. The status of a “Standing Deliberative Body” ensures high-level commitment to and sustainability of this idea. The chairperson of the SCA approves the composition of the council through consultations with the factions. The first composition of the deliberative body established in 2020 included almost all political groups of the SCA for 2016-2020 (members of two factions and two out of the three independent entities). Following the 2020 elections, the composition of the SCA was renewed which also changed the composition of the Open Governance Council. Currently, all political parties are represented in the council (members of both factions and independent MPs).

In 2022, the SCA formed the *International Relations and Strategic Development* Department, a structural unit responsible for open governance. Among other important issues, the department will also be actively engaged in the coordination, planning and reporting of the processes related to open governance. The SCA takes proactive steps to implement the principles of open governance within the entire institution. Therefore, all units playing a substantial role in these processes are actively involved in the development of plans or reports.

An overarching objective of the first plan on open governance was to implement standards in the directions such as increasing the openness of the representative body and improving the simplicity and effectiveness of communicating public issues by individuals to the SCA. Each commitment defined under the plan corresponds with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as *reduced inequalities* (SDG 10), *peace, justice, and strong institutions* (SDG 16) and *partnership for the goals* (SDG 17).

This report outlines the preparation process, implementation, and outcomes of the action plan. The process of report development was open and transparent, and the SCA Consultative Group composed of more than 10 local and international organizations participated in the process.



ACTION PLAN PREPARATION, IMPLEMENTATION AND REPORTING PROCESS

COMPLIANCE WITH THE OGP STANDARDS

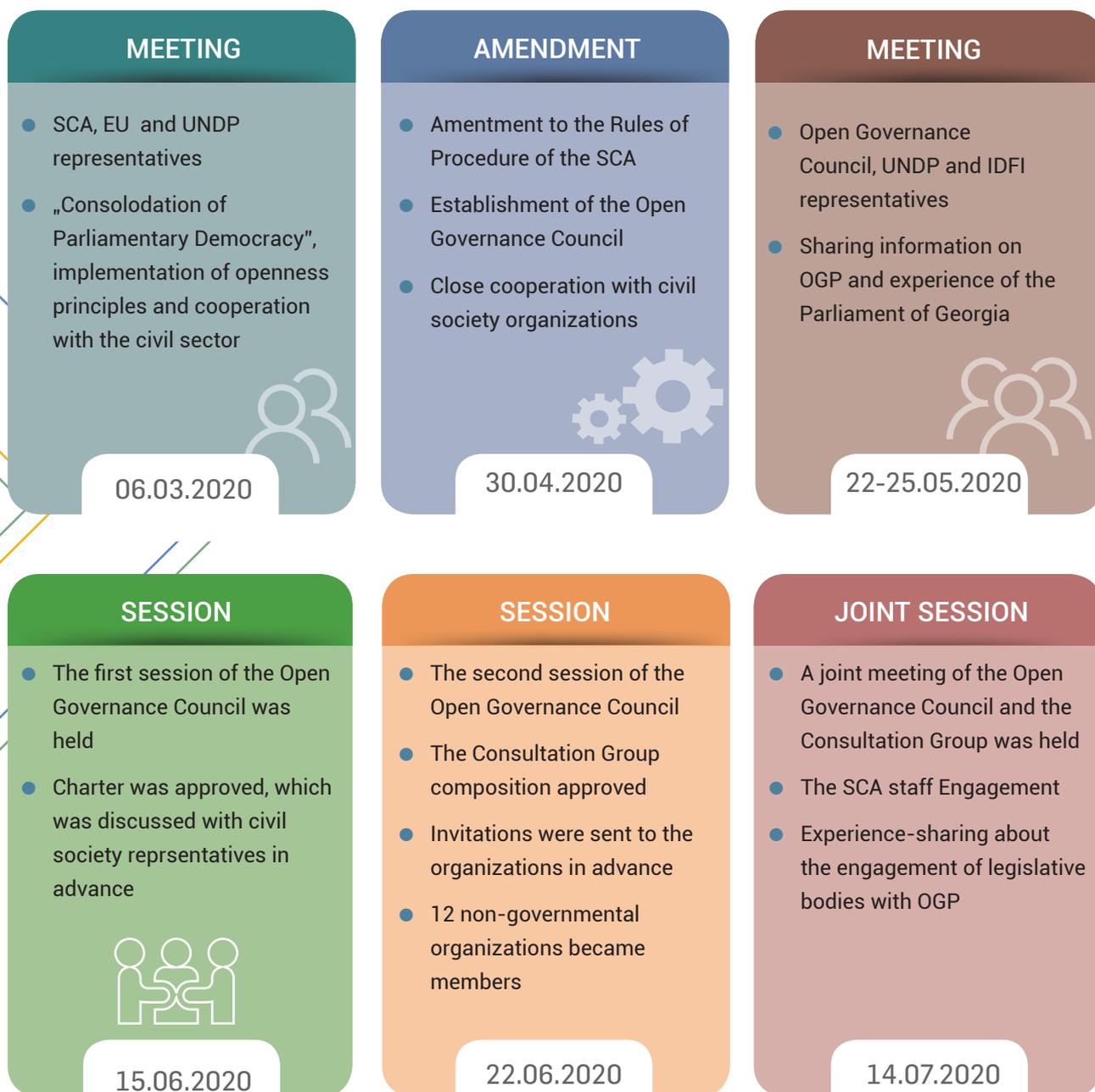
ACTION PLAN PREPARATION	1. Accessibility of the process and timeframe			2. Prior Notification			
	Was the information about the process and timeframes published prior to public consultations?	Yes	No	Was a prior notice given about public consultations?	Yes	No	
		✓			✓		
	3. Raising Awareness			4. Using Multiple Channels of Communication			
	Did the council organize public awareness campaigns?	Yes	No	4a. Online consultations:	Yes	No	
		✓		4b. Offline consultations:	Yes	No	
				✓			
5. Documents and Feedback							
Did the council provide a summary analysis of public comments?				Yes	No		
					✓		
ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION	6. Regular Multi-stakeholder Council						
	6a. Does such a council exist	Yes	No	6b. Does the council meet on a regular basis?	Yes	No	
		✓			✓		
ACTION PLAN REPORTING	7. Midterm Self-Assessment Report						
	7a. Was a midterm self-assessment report published?	Yes	No	7b. Was the report published in Georgian and English languages?	Yes	No	
				✓			✓
	7c. Is there a 2 week-period allocated for public comments?	Yes	No	7d. Does the report correspond with the key recommendations of the IRM? (If such exists)	Yes	No	
				✓			
	8. Final Self-Assessment Report						
8a. Was the final self-assessment report published?	Yes	No	8b. Was the report published in Georgian and English languages?	Yes	No		
			✓			✓	
8c. Is a 2 week-period provided for public comments?	Yes	No	8d. Does the report correspond with the key recommendations of the IRM? (If such exists)	Yes	No		
			✓				

On 30 April 2020, the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara (SCA) established the *Open Governance Council* – an institutional mechanism for ensuring the openness and transparency of the legislative body - and invited local non-governmental organizations to participate in the process.² Coordination between the SCA and the deliberative body enabled the preparation in a limited timeframe of the openness action plan, which laid down 15 far-reaching commitments (encompassing the areas of Citizen engagement, technology, and innovation in support of transparency and accountability).

² Amendments introduced to the Rules of Procedure on establishment of the deliberative body are provided below: <https://bit.ly/3s6uTa4>; The list of the members of the Open Governance Council Consultative Group: <https://bit.ly/3MS7xgh>; Charter of the Open Governance Council: <https://bit.ly/3kzEjXt>

It is noteworthy that two key civil society organizations active in Ajara (*Transparency International (TI) Georgia and Civil Society Institute (CSI)*), which made critical comments to the media on the four years of work performed by the SCA, expressed a particularly positive attitude towards the implementation of the open governance principles and the development of the first action plan.³

INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF LEGISLATIVE OPENNESS MECHANISM



These meetings enabled representatives of the SCA and civil society organizations to identify the challenges related to openness in the council operations and produce ideas for the development of the first openness action plan.

³ „Weak Oversight – NGOs on 4 years of work performed by the Members of the Supreme Council”, 5 October 2010, [Batumelebi.netgazeti.ge](https://bit.ly/3FczA7z), available: <https://bit.ly/3FczA7z>

COOPERATION WITH CONSULTATIVE GROUP AND PLAN APPROVAL

On 6 and 7 August 2020, the Open Governance Council and the Consultative Group held a joint meeting where they discussed initiatives on the open governance action plan and presented proposals on commitments under the plan. Out of 24 proposals, 15 commitments were selected for the Open Governance Council. The council fully denied one of the proposals on the revision of the Code of Ethics for the SCA Members (mainly because the establishment of obligation on political consensus for the new SCA composition was deemed inappropriate). Some of the initiatives were amended and jointly embedded in the action plan. The key objective of all commitments under the plan is to improve openness and accountability of the legislative body, as well as enhance citizen engagement and the public service provision process in general.

The process was preceded by a public call for "Open Governance Action Plan Ideas"⁴ and an independent meeting of the Consultative Group, where existing ideas were discussed.⁵ Draft commitments prepared by the member organizations are available on the official website of the SCA. Based on the voting, the Open Governance Council approved the recommendations presented by the SCA Staff and representatives, as well as the Consultative Group and submitted the action plan to the SCA bureau.⁶ On 14 August 2020, the Action Plan for 2020-2021 was officially approved,⁶ and 15 commitments of the plan were divided into four categories:



⁴ Information on establishment of the Open Governance Council:
<https://bit.ly/3kElsKJ>

⁵ Information on meetings held:
<https://bit.ly/3MOSJ1J>

⁶ Ideas provided by the Consultative Group:
<https://bit.ly/3kGYrqp>

⁷ Information on the meeting of the Open Governance Council:
<http://sca.ge/geo/list/show/2238-umaghlesi-sabchos-ghia-mmartvelobis-sabchos-skhdoma>

⁸ Information on SCA Bureau meeting:
<http://sca.ge/geo/list/show/2239-biuros-skhdoma>

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

1. Public Consultations in the Law-Making Process
2. Improvement of Oversight of the Executive Government in Collaboration with the Civil Society
3. Establishment of the Citizen engagement Center of the Supreme Council of Ajara
4. Development of a System for Electronic and Written Petitions

INFORMATION ACCESSIBILITY

5. Creation of a Mechanism for Media Accreditation
6. Adaptation of the Website of the Supreme Council of Ajara to the Needs of Persons with Disabilities
7. Adaptation of the Building of the Supreme Council of Ajara to the Needs of Persons with Disabilities
8. Increase of Accessibility of Information Regarding the Activities of the Supreme Council of Ajara for People with Hearing Impairments - Adaptation to Sign Language

TECHNOLOGIES AND INNOVATION

9. Electronic System for Issuing a Pass to Enter the Building of the Supreme Council of Ajara and Attend its Sessions
10. Online Transmission of the Sessions of the Supreme Council of Ajara and Its Bodies and Citizen engagement in these processes
11. Upload of Documents on the Website of the Supreme Council of Ajara in a Machine-Readable Format; Increase of the List of Information to be Published Proactively

ACCOUNTABILITY

12. Public Reports of the Supreme Council of Ajara, Its Bodies and Members
13. Development and Publishing of Committee Action Plans of the Supreme Council of Ajara
14. An Open Door Day
15. A CSO Day

With the support of partner organizations, a special calendar was prepared and published to facilitate information perception and action plan implementation for the council members/staff and stakeholders⁹

⁹ Open Governance 2020-2021 Action Plan Calendar:
<http://www.sca.ge/res/docs/გეგმისკალენდარი.PDF>

FULFILMENT OF OPEN GOVERNANCE PLAN

It should be highlighted that the SCA was actively engaged in the institutionalization of openness initiatives. In September 2021, the SCA allocated 300,000 Georgian Lari for the implementation of several commitments of the action plan, including the following: live broadcast of the SCA sessions in high quality, accessibility of the building and infrastructural works for the opening of the Citizen Engagement Center.

On 3 February 2021, the Open Governance Consultative Group held an online meeting where it discussed the commitments of the Open Governance Action Plan 2020-2021.

On 12 March, the first meeting of the Open Governance Council of the SCA was organized. During the meeting, members were informed about the action plan commitments and activities their implementation. The following topics were discussed in detail during the meeting: the progress achieved, implementation and ongoing activities of the SCA Open Governance Action Plan 2020-2021; the role of the council in fulfilment of the commitments and their monitoring. A central focus was given to the role of civil society and its importance in the action plan preparation process. A meeting of the Open Governance Council and the Consultative Group was planned to discuss the fulfilment of the Action Plan 2020-2021.

During the following meeting on 1 April 2021 (conducted in a hybrid format - online, as well as in-person meeting), the parties discussed the progress achieved in the implementation of the action plan commitments and determined the necessary activities. These included the support of partner organizations in activities, such as the establishment of the Citizen Engagement Center, the creation of an online platform, the establishment of reporting practice, etc. In the course of the meeting, the council discussed the resources available for the implementation of the commitments, in particular preconditions for the allocation of financial resources for the establishment of the Citizen Engagement Center, online broadcasting of SCA sessions, and facility adaptation.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT

On 31 March 2022, a training session on the preparation of the self-assessment report on the implementation of open governance was organized with the support of the European Union (EU), the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI). An open governance expert Lasha Gogidze led the meeting and members of the Open Governance Council, as well as the personnel of the following departments, participated in the meeting - Legal and Human Resources Management; Organization and Administrative; Media and Public Relations; and International Relations and Strategic Development (*Department was officially established on April 1, training was attended by staff members already selected for it*).

A guideline for the preparation of the open governance self-assessment report was developed for the SCA to take into account the open government partnership standards and best practices in the reporting process.

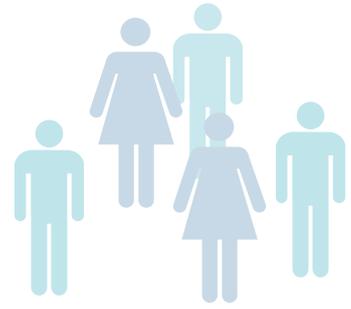
Following the training, working meetings were organized with the SCA departments of Public Relations, International Relations, and Strategic Development. On April 12-13 of the current year, during the meeting, which was attended by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) representatives, report preparation work was distributed between two departments. After collecting and processing the required information, based on the analysis, the draft version of the final report was developed.

The process was public: the draft version of the report was published on the SCA website on 6 May 2022 and was sent to the Consultative Group under the Open Governance Council.



FULFILMENT OF ACTION PLAN COMMITMENTS





The below tables elaborate on the status, process, hindering factors, outcomes, and future steps for each commitment under the action plan. As fulfilment of such commitments encompassed multiple steps (according to relevant indicators), fulfilment was assessed at four stages:



RELEVANT STAGE /
commitment fulfilment Not Started

0%

of measures
implemented



RELEVANT STAGE /
commitment Limited Implementation

1%-50%

of measures
implemented



RELEVANT STAGE /
commitment Substantially Completed

51%-99%

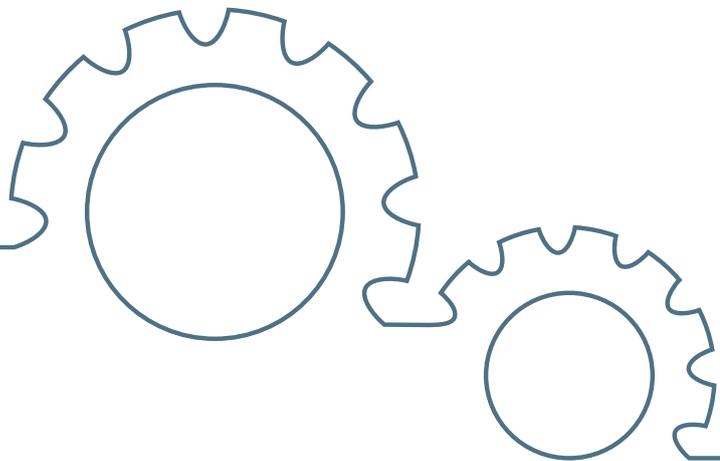
of measures
implemented



RELEVANT STAGE /
commitment completed

100%

of measures
implemented



COMMITMENT 1: PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS IN THE LAW-MAKING PROCESS

Commitment implementation initiation and completion date
(September 2020 - April 2022)

Lead Agency	The Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara (SCA)			
COMMITMENT DESCRIPTION				
Which civil issue does the commitment relate to?	<p>Prior to the fulfilment of this commitment, the SCA Rules of Procedure did not envisage public discussions or other forms of public consultation on legislative bills.</p> <p>The SCA is working on key legislative bills both at the regional and national levels. Citizen engagement in this process requires improvement (with the exception of constitutional amendments, which are required to be publicly discussed in every municipality of the region).</p> <p>Prior to the fulfilment of this commitment, the SCA website did not provide such an opportunity. The Council acknowledged that the opportunity to make comments on draft laws published on the website could increase public engagement in the regional law-making process and started working on this issue.</p>			
Commitment fulfilment status	NOT INITIATED	LIMITED IMPLEMENTATION	SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETED	COMPLETED
Commitment stage/indicator fulfilment status	date of initiation:	Date of completion	Indicator fulfilment status	
<p>STAGE 1</p> <p>Amending the SCA Rules of Procedure to reflect the commitment to conduct public consultations on legislative bills either physically or electronically.</p>	2020	05.2021	<p>Completed</p> <p>Paragraph 8 of Article 86 of the SCA Rules of Procedure is now formulated in the following manner:</p> <p>Article 86, Paragraph 8: „In order to receive public consultation on a draft legislation or its specific articles/ sections published on the SCA website, any person may submit an opinion/ remark in the form of a comment" (The Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara, Regulation N28-IIS, 20 May 2021 – website, 25.05.2021).</p> <p>The amendment created a legal basis for submitting comments to the website.</p>	
<p>STAGE 2</p> <p>Development of guidelines for SCA Members and staff on stakeholder engagement in the law-making process, feedback, and reporting.</p>	11.2020		<p>Limited Implementation</p> <p>Guidelines have not been developed. By the time of publishing this report, the work on guideline development was only initiated.</p>	
<p>STAGE 3</p> <p>Training of staff on collection and analysis of comments/remarks/ opinions as well as on the provision of feedback and reporting</p>	03.2021	05.2021	<p>Not Started</p>	

<p>STAGE 4</p> <p>Creating the opportunity to make comments or upload remarks/ opinions on legislative bills published on the SCA website; developing the respective platform.</p>	03.2021	04.2022	<p>Completed</p> <p>An online platform chaerte.sca.ge was created. The platform enables users to submit comments and/or suggestions/ opinions on legislative drafts uploaded on the website.</p>
<p>STAGE 5</p> <p>Establishing a practice of discussing legislative bills presented to the SCA or legislative initiatives of Georgia either in person or electronically.</p>	03.2021		<p>Limited Implementation</p> <p>In March 2021, the SCA held a discussion with stakeholders on a draft of the legal act on the Rules of Media Accreditation. Representatives of media outlets and civil society organizations participated in the process (please refer to Commitment 5 of this report).</p>
<p>Hindering Factors</p>	<p>Fulfilment of the commitment and its certain stages was delayed due to the pandemic, and, particularly, because of the lack of human resources (to develop relevant guidelines and train staff). The restrictions made it impossible to organize in-person discussions, while technical resources appeared to be insufficient for online discussions. The fund allocation process was delayed as well, resulting in a delay in platform development. The platform became functional only at the beginning of 2022, which prevented the implementation of comment and feedback capabilities.</p>		
<p>Outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The SCA Rules of Procedure already envisage public consultations in physical or electronic format; ● Work on the engagement of stakeholders, feedback and report guidelines is already in progress; ● A functional allowing the submission of comments and/or proposals/ opinions are integrated on the SCA website. 		
<p>Future Steps</p>	<p>The commitment may be continued in the new action plan, as it is important to introduce and promote legislative changes made in the rules of procedure in practice.</p>		



CONTACT INFORMATION		
Lead Agency	The Staff of the Supreme Council	
Responsible Individuals (position)	Zurab Tchurkveidze	
E-mail and office phone number	tel: 577 472 147 E-mail: ztchurkveidze@gmail.com	
Other Actors	Ministries, Departments/Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Constitutional, Legal and Procedural Issues Committee of the SCA ● Public and Media Relations Department of the SCA
	Civil Society Organizations, Public Sector, International Organizations, Working Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● UN Development Programme (UNDP) Georgia ● Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI)

COMMITMENT 2:

STRENGTHENING THE GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT IN COLLABORATION WITH THE CIVIL SOCIETY

Commitment implementation initiation and completion date
(September 2020 – December 2021 “permanently”)

Lead Agency	The Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara (SCA)			
COMMITMENT DESCRIPTION				
Which civil issue does the commitment relate to?	<p>One of the SCA's principal functions is to exercise government oversight. Although the SCA Rules of Procedure introduced several new mechanisms, the majority thereof do not consider citizen engagement in oversight processes.</p> <p>Currently, there is no consolidated website for important projects (initially, at least infrastructural, or other major projects) that can host the information on budgetary expenditures (project, tender documentation, documentation regarding oversight by an agency undertaking the expenses, information related to oversight conducted by the SCA, etc.). .</p>			
Commitment fulfilment status	NOT INITIATED	LIMITED IMPLEMENTATION	SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETED	COMPLETED
Commitment stage/indicator fulfilment status	date of initiation:	Date of completion	Indicator fulfilment status	
STAGE 1 Development of an oversight mechanism and respective procedures through the engagement of the civil society; designing of a web-portal concept.			Not Started	
STAGE 2 Introducing necessary amendments to the Rules of Procedure.			Not Started	
STAGE 3 Holding working meetings on relevant mechanisms and procedures between the SCA and representatives of the civil society, exploring partnerships for designing the web portal.			Not Started	
STAGE 4 Training and developing guiding principles on reporting with respect to the oversight processes for SCA Members, SCA staff and representatives of the civil society.			Not Started	
STAGE 5 Launching a pilot web portal and gradually publishing information on state projects.			Not Started	

STAGE 6 Selection of state projects to be monitored and conducting oversight through Citizen engagement.			Not Started
STAGE 7 Producing reports on the results of monitoring of projects and publication of information on the web portal.			Not Started
Hindering Factors	Financial resources could not be allocated in a timely manner and the oversight mechanism and procedures proposed under this commitment for the executive authority (creation of a unified project portal) could not be developed.		
Outcomes	<p>Exercising oversight over the executive branch of the government in cooperation with civil society was not achieved: relevant oversight mechanisms and procedures were not developed, and the outcome was not achieved.</p> <p>The regulatory framework for the Executive government oversight mechanism includes The Constitution of Ajara (Article 15) and The Rules of Procedure of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara (Articles 126-130, 134 and 135).</p>		
Future Steps	<p>The Open Governance Council will consider if this commitment should appear in the next action plan with input from the Consultative Group. Depending on the decision, the following steps may be taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Timely allocation of the financial resources necessary to establish a consolidated project portal; ● Selection of projects for oversight and supervision of their implementation through sectoral committees and the engagement of the civil society. 		



CONTACT INFORMATION		
Lead Agency	Staff of the Supreme Council	
Responsible Individuals (position)	Zurab Tchurkveidze	
E-mail and office phone number	577 472 147 E-mail: ztchurkveidze@gmail.com	
Other Actors	Ministries, Departments/Authority	
	Civil Society Organizations, Public Sector, International Organizations, Working Groups	

COMMITMENT 3: ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT CENTER OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF AJARA

Commitment implementation initiation and completion date
(September 2020 - April 2022)

Lead Agency	The Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara (SCA)			
COMMITMENT DESCRIPTION				
Which civil issue does the commitment relate to?	<p>Since 2020, the SCA has been actively undertaking efforts to implement open governance principles in its activities. However, receiving individuals without bureaucratic barriers and a closer relationship with them remains a challenge. In addition, only part of the SCA building is adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities and complete adaptation of the building requires time and major financial (and other) resources.</p> <p>Since 2020, the need to provide public services with minimum physical contact to reduce the spread of COVID-19 has created major challenges. Obtaining a pass to enter the SCA building, meeting with relevant personnel and submitting applications require communication with multiple people, which increases the risk of spreading the virus.</p> <p>It is also noteworthy, that the SCA building represents a monument of cultural heritage, one of the landmarks of Batumi, which the Council uses for various events (including meetings with school and higher education institution students). A number of historic items and pieces of art are already present in the building. However, the study tour program has not been developed yet. If existed, such an opportunity could increase public awareness about the SCA, as well as on the history of parliamentarism in general.</p>			
Commitment fulfilment status	NOT INITIATED	LIMITED IMPLEMENTATION	SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETED	COMPLETED
Commitment stage/ indicator fulfilment status	date of initiation:	Date of completion	Indicator fulfilment status	
STAGE 1 Development of a concept for the Citizen Engagement Center.	09.2020	03.2021	Completed With the partners' support, the concept for the Citizen Engagement Center has been developed and is publicly available on the council website: https://bit.ly/3vKN07E	
STAGE 2 Considering and approving the concept for the Citizen Engagement Center.	04.2021	06.2021	Completed The Staff of the SCA, the Council of Open Governance and the Consultative Group considered the concept (1 April 2021). The document and the action plan have been revised based on the feedback received. (Information on the meeting of 1 April 2021: https://bit.ly/3Fks3U8)	
STAGE 3 Developing and approving study tour programs (while engaging the Agency for Cultural Heritage, educational institutions, and other stakeholders).	09.2020	10.2021	Completed The Staff of the SCA has developed a study tour program. However, it has not yet been discussed with external stakeholders due to restrictions applied to in-person meetings and the delayed development of the program.	

<p>STAGE 4</p> <p>Creating, setting up and equipping the Citizen Engagement Center, and preparing information materials.</p>	10.2021	04.2022	<p>Completed</p> <p>Through the savings from the budget for 2021, funds were allocated, and electronic tender (NAT) NAT210019702 was announced for creating and equipping the Citizen Engagement Center.¹⁰ The result was the construction of a fully adapted space with a meeting table, personnel working space, and information boards. Information materials on petitions have been prepared and materials on other mechanisms of engagement are in the making (up to 10 brochures or leaflets).</p>
<p>STAGE 5</p> <p>Implementing adapted services at the Citizen Engagement Center, developing guidelines for staff and providing respective training.</p>	03.2022	04.2022	<p>Completed</p> <p>A workshop on citizen engagement issues, and services to be provided by the Center was organized with the Center personnel. Since May 2022, additional training has been provided on service standards and provision of services to the PwDs; staff guidelines were prepared.</p>
<p>STAGE 6</p> <p>Promotion of study tours and implementation of the schedule/procedure for such tours.</p>	02.2022	04.2022	<p>Completed</p> <p>Information on study tours was published on the citizen engagement digital platform chaerte.sca.ge and a responsible employee was appointed (Tsira Khajishvili) to ensure continuity of the process). In April 2022, the first study tour was organized under the new program.¹¹ Additional informational materials (brochures) are being developed for further promotion.</p>



¹⁰ Citizen engagement Center tender details are available on this link: <http://tenders.procurement.gov.ge/public/?go=423622&lang=ge>

¹¹ Information on the first study tour organized based on the updated program is available on the following link: <https://bit.ly/3kCPZIH>

Hindering Factors	<p>Fulfilment of the commitment and its relevant stages was mainly hindered due to a late allocation of financial resources (these funds were allocated only by the end of 2021). The fulfilment of the state procurement contract was delayed as well: works were completed in March 2022 instead of the agreed date of the end of 2021. This affected the implementation of the contingent activities.</p> <p>Assigning personnel from the Council Staff depended on the completion of the construction works of the Center. Accordingly, the personnel were assigned in April 2022, which delayed their retraining and preparation of the guidelines.</p>
Outcomes	Adapted space for citizen engagement is already in operation in the SCA, and individuals have access to the Center without procedures for a pass and other bureaucratic barriers. They can easily obtain information on SCA's activities, plans and implementation. In addition, individuals have access to electronic services there (when required, assistance to use these services). They can submit applications, make appointments with officials, watch a live broadcast of SCA sessions on the screen and access other services
Future Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Preparation of information materials with donors' support and their placement at the Engagement Center.



CONTACT INFORMATION		
Lead Agency	Citizen Engagement Division of the SCA	
Responsible Individuals (position)	Tsira Khajishvili <i>Head of Division</i>	
E-mail and office phone number	tel: 032 228 54 79 E-mail: Tsira1616@gmail.com	
Other Actors	Ministries, Departments/Authority	
	Civil Society Organizations, Public Sector, International Organizations, Working Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● UN Development Programme (UNDP) Georgia ● Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) ● nformation Center for Persons with Disabilities



COMMITMENT 4:

DEVELOPING A SYSTEM FOR ELECTRONIC AND WRITTEN PETITIONS

Commitment implementation initiation and completion date
(September 2020 – October 2021)

Lead Agency	The Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara (SCA)			
COMMITMENT DESCRIPTION				
Which civil issue does the commitment relate to?	<p>Currently, the SCA Rules of Procedure do not contain provisions regarding the submission of petitions neither in a physical format nor electronically.</p> <p>The submission of petitions is important for citizen engagement and the implementation of open governance principles.</p> <p>It is necessary to develop special rules for the submission and consideration of petitions in accordance with best international practices.</p>			
Commitment fulfilment status	NOT INITIATED	LIMITED IMPLEMENTATION	SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETED	COMPLETED
Commitment stage/ indicator fulfilment status	date of initiation:	Date of completion	Indicator fulfilment status	
STAGE 1 Introduction of respective amendments into the SCA Rules of Procedure, to submit petitions electronically and in a written form.	09.2020	12.2020	Completed The Rules of Procedure of the SCA were amended and the procedure for the submission, publication, discussion, and approval of (written and electronic) petitions was detailed therein (see amendments).	
STAGE 2 Training relevant staff members of the SCA	12.2020	03.2021	Completed On 23 April 2021, IDFI organized a meeting with SCA personnel on the procedures of the submission and consideration of petitions. Representatives of the Parliamentary Committee on Procedural Matters and Rules also participated in the meeting and shared the experience of the Parliament.. ¹²	
STAGE 3 Introduction of written petitions.	03.2021	05.2021	Completed Through the amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the SCA, a mechanism for submission of written petitions has been implemented and set in motion. As of now, no petition has been submitted to the Council using the mentioned mechanism.	

¹² Open Governance 2020-2021 action plan, commitments 4 and 13 related amendments made to the Rules of Procedure refer to the link <https://bit.ly/3ye3V3S>

<p>STAGE 4</p> <p>Development of a concept for the platform of electronic petitions and the Terms of Reference (ToR).</p>	<p>01.2021</p>	<p>10.2021</p>	<p>The rule on petition submission and consideration, and electronic petition preparation and facilitation instructions have been prepared; With the support of the EU, UNDP and IDFI, workshops were held for the Council staff and members of the working group on the creation of the new platform.</p> <p>Based on the mentioned rules and procedures, the platform chaerte.sca.ge was established and launched in a pilot regime. Consequently, approval of the concept was deemed unnecessary. As of 13 April 2022, 3 electronic petitions have been published on the portal.¹³</p>
<p>Hindering Factors</p>	<p>The commitment was fully implemented, and no hindering factors were observed.</p>		
<p>Outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All personnel working on the petition has received training; ● Amendments introduced into the SCA Rules of Procedure; ● A written petition mechanism has been established (25.12.2020); ● The platform - Chaerte.sca.ge has been created and an electronic petition mechanism is now available (01.01.2022); ● 3 petitions have been published on: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The development of a targeted program for the socio-economic empowerment/support of women in the Autonomous Republic of Ajara; 2. The provision of high-speed internet access to mountainous settlements of Ajara municipalities; 3. The establishment of free spaces at the municipal centres of Ajara. ● Informational materials were produced and distributed to raise awareness on written and electronic petitions (including physical copies and promotion via social networks).¹⁴ 		
<p>Future Steps</p>	<p>The commitment was fully implemented. The team continues working on the sustainability and promotion of the mechanism with the aim to ensure its active application by citizens.</p> <p>Taking into consideration best practices, the council may revise fulfilment of the commitment, evaluate, and analyse results, and plan updates as required.</p>		

¹³ Petitions published on [Chaerte.sca.ge](https://chaerte.sca.ge) are available here: <https://chaerte.sca.ge/ge/petitions>
 Amendments made to the Rules of Procedure for implementation of the petition mechanism are available here: <https://rb.gy/ig36og>

¹⁴ Information on the petitions submitted to and considered by the SCA is available here: <https://bit.ly/36TXOqi>;
 Information on the petition published on the Interpressnews is available here: <https://bit.ly/30FN0IF>, <https://bit.ly/3xTV7Ae>;
 Information shared by the IDFI regarding the petition is available here: <https://bit.ly/3v0e4Jv>;
 The SCA official Facebook page posted information on the petition, refer to the link below: <https://bit.ly/3KqIPSt>;
 Information on the petition published by Batumelebi is available here: <https://bit.ly/3y03b2v>;
 Information published by the TV Broadcasting of Ajara regarding the petition is available here: <https://bit.ly/3LtBSkM>



CONTACT INFORMATION		
Lead Agency		<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Legal and Human Resources Management Department of SCA● Constitutional, Legal and Procedural Issues Committee of the SCA
Responsible Individuals (position)		Vazha Tsetskhladze <i>Head of Department</i> Paata Keshelava <i>Head of Committee Staff</i>
E-mail and office phone number		tel: 0322285450 E-mail: vazhatsetskhladze@gmail.com tel: 0322285477 E-mail: pkeshelava@yahoo.com
Other Actors	Ministries, Departments/Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Public and Media Relations Department of the SCA● Consultative Group under the Open Governance Council of the SCA● The Parliament of Georgia
	Civil Society Organizations, Public Sector, International Organizations, Working Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● UN Development Programme (UNDP) Georgia● Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI)



COMMITMENT 5: CREATION OF MECHANISM FOR MEDIA ACCREDITATION

Commitment implementation initiation and completion date
(September 2020 – April 2021)

Lead Agency	The Staff of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Public and Media Relations Department of the SCA ● Legal and Human Resources Management Department of SCA 			
COMMITMENT DESCRIPTION				
Which civil issue does the commitment relate to?	External persons enter the SCA building in accordance with security rules, including the admission of media representatives based on accreditation. Before adopting this rule, media representatives had to obtain a pass valid for a single visit to the SCA. This required additional procedures and excessive time and had a negative impact on the transparency of SCA's work. Therefore, it was necessary to adopt rules for the accreditation of media representatives, which would ensure increased accessibility to SCA's activities and transparency in general.			
Commitment fulfilment status	NOT INITIATED	LIMITED IMPLEMENTATION	SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETED	COMPLETED
Commitment stage/ indicator fulfilment status	date of initiation:	Date of completion	Indicator fulfilment status	
STAGE 1 Developing rules on accreditation.	09.2020	10.2020	Completed The SCA prepared the rules for holding a press conference and issuing accreditation to media representatives within the allocated timeframe.	
STAGE 2 Discussing rules on accreditation with representatives of civil society and the media.	09.2020	03.2021	Completed To discuss Accreditation Rules, a working meeting with media representatives and the civil sector was organized. A majority of comments were reflected in the final version of the Accreditation Rules: https://bit.ly/3OXd3Ql	
STAGE 3 Approving rules on accreditation and communicating them to relevant employees.	11.2020	12.2020	Completed All personnel in the Media and Public Relations Department (by the moment of fulfilment, this department was called the Public Relations and Protocol Department) read the accreditation rules before it was published on the official website of the SCA: https://bit.ly/3sg9uew	

Hindering Factors	Media representatives received the draft version of the rules for comments and remarks via email. However, they did not respond with any feedback. Accordingly, the implementation of the commitment was delayed until the organization of physical meetings was feasible.
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The draft of the Accreditation Rules was prepared; ● Media and civil sector representatives were engaged in the preparation of the final version of the Accreditation Rules was prepared; ● Accreditation Rules were approved; ● Based on the request, accreditation passes were prepared and issued to the media representatives listed below: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adjara TV – 1-year accreditation for 14 employees and 3-month passes for 10 persons (a journalist, cameraman, director, live broadcast group and etc.) 2. Formula TV - 3 employees 3. Fact-Meter TV - 1 employee 4. Newspaper "Adjara"- 3 employees 5. Imedi TV - 2 employees 6. Mtavari Channel LLC - 2 employees 7. TV 25 - 10 employees ● Media representatives systematically use accreditation passes upon their visit to the legislative body in accordance with the new rule; ● The Rule has been published on www.sca.ge and the portal chaerte.sca.ge. All interested individuals may access and view the requirements of accreditation procedures.
Future Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● According to the rule, accreditation passes will be issued to media representatives in the future as well; ● Based on the feedback received, the rule may be subject to revision for relevant amendments.



CONTACT INFORMATION		
Lead Agency	Public and Media Relations Department of the SCA	
Responsible Individuals (position)	Feride Ustiashvili <i>Head of Department</i> Suzana Vashakmadze <i>Media Relations and Information division</i>	
E-mail and office phone number	E-mail: ustiashvilif@gmail.com tel: 032 2 28 54 90 E-mail: suzi_vashackmadze@sca.ge Tel: 032 2 28 54 79	
Other Actors	Ministries, Departments/ Authority	Legal and Human Resources Management Department of the SCA
	Civil Society Organizations, Public Sector, International Organizations, Working Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Media representatives (newspaper Adjara, TV 25, TV Adjara, Fact Check, Radio Adjara, TV 12); ● Civil society organizations that took part in the discussion: UN Development Programme (UNDP) Georgia, Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI), Transparency International Georgia

COMMITMENT 6: ADAPTING THE WEBSITE OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF AJARA TO THE NEEDS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Commitment implementation initiation and completion date
(December 2020 – July 2021)

Lead Agency	The Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara (SCA)		
COMMITMENT DESCRIPTION			
Which civil issue does the commitment relate to?	<p>In 2013, the Parliament of Georgia ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), and, therefore, undertook a commitment to ensure and promote the protection of PwDs' rights. Fulfilment of this international obligation represents the basis for including this commitment in the Action Plan and ensuring its implementation.</p> <p>The official website of the SCA, www.sca.ge did not accommodate PwDs' needs and did not offer an audio program.</p> <p>Everyone could not access the website equally and obtain information of their interest.</p>		
Commitment fulfilment status	NOT INITIATED	LIMITED IMPLEMENTATION	COMPLETED
Commitment stage/ indicator fulfilment status	date of initiation:	Date of completion	Indicator fulfilment status
STAGE 1 Development of a concept for adaptation of the website to the special needs.	12.2020	06.2021	Completed With the support of donor and partner organizations, the accessibility concept for PwDs for the SCA website was developed. The development process was based on the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1. The WCAG, an authoritative global association, aims to create common access standards for the PwDs. Representatives of the Support and Information Center for Persons with Disabilities participated in the consultation process. ¹⁵



¹⁵ The SCA website accessibility concept is available on the link:
<https://bit.ly/3FhRs0R>

<p>STAGE 2</p> <p>Preparation of a project and budget for adaptation of the website to special needs</p>	06.2021	07.2021	<p>Completed</p> <p>The concept for the adaption of the website was also an adaptation project for the website. Accordingly, it required a corresponding budget preparation. Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) studied the market to identify and prepare website adaptation cost estimates.</p> <p>Commitment indicators included the following matters: preparation of the project and budget for adapting the SCA website in accordance with relevant standards, project approval and the development of the adaptation action plan.</p> <p>By completing both stages of the commitment, the objectives set under the indicators have been achieved: the concept and project for adaptation have been developed and the budget has been prepared. The action plan for adaptation was not prepared as developing the concept and budget appeared to be sufficient for achieving the website adaptation.¹⁶</p>
<p>Hindering Factors</p>	<p>The commitment was fully implemented, and no hindering factors were observed.</p>		
<p>Outcomes</p>	<p>In cooperation with the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI), also with the support of the European Union (EU), and the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the SCA website was adapted (sca.ge), which is now accessible for persons with disabilities.</p> <p>Now users can adjust text, background, colour, and fonts on the adapted website. The website provides an installation file for a special text-to-speech program, and users can access written texts in audio format. The website also allows for information materials to be uploaded with simultaneous subtitles.</p> <p>Adaptation of the website supports the SCA to improve equal accessibility to the website content and ensure inclusive citizen engagement. This will increase the transparency and openness of the SCA and will have a positive impact on citizen engagement in SCA's decision-making process.</p>		
<p>Future Steps</p>	<p><i>The commitment has been fulfilled.</i> However, work will continue to promote and further improve the website based on the feedback obtained from persons with disabilities.</p>		

CONTACT INFORMATION		
Lead Agency	The Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara (SCA)	
Responsible Individuals (position)	Zurab Tchurkveidze	
E-mail and office phone number	E-mail: ztchurkveidze@gmail.com	
<p>Other Actors</p>	Ministries, Departments/ Authority	
	Civil Society Organizations, Public Sector, International Organizations, Working Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● UN Development Programme (UNDP) Georgia ● Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) ● The Support and Information Center for Persons with Disabilities - Ajara

¹⁶ Website adaptation competition/tender details organized by IDFI are available here: <https://idfi.ge/ge/page/competitionview/45/>

COMMITMENT 7:

ADAPTING THE BUILDING OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF AJARA ACCORDING TO THE NEEDS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Commitment implementation initiation and completion date
(October 2020 – January 2021)

Lead Agency	The Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara (SCA)			
COMMITMENT DESCRIPTION				
Which civil issue does the commitment relate to?	The SCA building is not adapted for persons with disabilities (PwDs), which hinders their engagement in activities of the legislative body of the region and access to its building. It is necessary to adopt specific measures to enable every person to access the SCA building in an equal manner.			
Commitment fulfilment status	NOT INITIATED	LIMITED IMPLEMENTATION	SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETED	COMPLETED
Commitment stage/ indicator fulfilment status	date of initiation:	Date of completion	Indicator fulfilment status	
STAGE 1 Development of a concept of adaptation of the building.	10.2019	07.2021	Completed With the support of the European Union (EU) and UN Development Programme (UNDP) and commissioned by the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI), Non-commercial non-profit organization "Mariani" experts Toma Kakabadze and Nino Chkhaidze developed a concept for SCA building adaptation to persons with mobility, vision and hearing impairments. The development process was based on the information obtained by a detailed assessment of the building environment and accessibility. It was additionally informed by international legal documents and expert analysis. Accordingly, one of the main indicators - concept development in accordance with international standards – has been fulfilled. ¹⁷	
STAGE 2 Preparation of a project and budget for adapting the building.	11.2021	01.2022	Completed Based on the concept, the SCA commissioned a building accessibility project and cost estimates. The draft version of the project was reviewed with the authors of the concept and other stakeholders and their recommendations informed the final version of the project. By implementing this commitment, the following indicators were also fulfilled: an adaptation project and budget were prepared and approved by the SCA. ¹⁸	

¹⁷ The SCA building accessibility concept is available here:
<https://bit.ly/3saMm11>

¹⁸ The SCA building accessibility project and cost estimate details are available here:
<http://tenders.procurement.gov.ge/public/?go=426434&lang=ge>

STAGE 3 Approving the action plan for adapting the building.	12.2021	12.2021	Completed Based on the adaptation project and cost estimates, the SCA determined the timeframe for the adaptation of the building adaptation and approved it under the Rules of Procedure. According to Paragraph 3 of Article 3 and Paragraph 7 of Article 157 of the Rules of Procedure, the SCA administration building will become accessible for persons with disabilities starting from 1 January 2024. ¹⁹
Hindering Factors	<p>In the project development process, the experts physically examined the SCA building and analysed the necessities. Also, several meetings were organized with the participation of SCA representatives. The issues and recommendations identified during these meetings were reflected in the document. After developing the concept of accessibility, its design and printed version were prepared. Considering all these factors, the fulfilment of the first stage of the commitment was delayed for several months.</p> <p>The postponement of the final version of the document affected and delayed the implementation of the following stage as well – the acquisition of the project and cost estimate.</p> <p>The possibility of building adaption was listed in the risks section of the Action Plan. However, the standards included in the accessibility concept are tailored to the SCA building, which was respectively reflected in the adaptation project.</p> <p>Allocating financial resources for the adaptation process also represented another risk. However, the adaptation process is scheduled to be completed by 1 January 2024, the SCA will manage to allocate relevant funds.</p>		
Outcomes	<p>The SCA has already prepared a building adaptation concept for persons with mobility, vision, and hearing impairments.</p> <p>A building adaptation project is commissioned and a cost estimate is prepared; based on these documents, the SCA building adaptation process can be completed by 1 January 2024.</p>		
Future Steps	<p>The commitment has been fully implemented, but the work continues to design new services for persons with disabilities, and increase their engagement in SCA activities.</p>		



CONTACT INFORMATION		
Lead Agency	The Staff of the Supreme Council of Ajara	
Responsible Individuals (position)	Zurab Tchurkveidze	
E-mail and office phone number	E-mail: ztchurkveidze@gmail.com	
Other Actors	Ministries, Departments/ Authority	Financial, Procurement and Technical Assistance Department of SCA
	Civil Society Organizations, Public Sector, International Organizations, Working Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● UN Development Programme (UNDP) Georgia ● Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) ● Non-commercial non-profit organization "Mariani" ● Non-commercial non-profit organization "Youth Organization Change for Equal Rights" ● Support and Information Center for Persons with Disabilities - Ajara

¹⁹ SCA Rules of Procedure are available here: <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4529420>

COMMITMENT 8:

INCREASING ACCESSIBILITY OF INFORMATION REGARDING ACTIVITIES OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF THE AUTONOMOUS REPUBLIC OF AJARA FOR PEOPLE WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENTS - ADAPTATION TO SIGN LANGUAGE

Commitment implementation initiation and completion date
(September 2020 – April 2021)

Lead Agency	The Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara (SCA)			
COMMITMENT DESCRIPTION				
Which civil issue does the commitment relate to?	Persons with hearing impairment (persons with partial or total hearing loss) still do not have access to SCA's current activities. Persons with hearing impairment are only able to obtain information about SCA activities from the news. Their needs are not considered during public meetings.			
Commitment fulfilment status	NOT INITIATED	LIMITED IMPLEMENTATION	SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETED	COMPLETED
Commitment stage/indicator fulfilment status	date of initiation:	Date of completion	Indicator fulfilment status	
STAGE 1 Selecting staff for ensuring translation to sign language.	09.2020	05.2022	Substantially Completed A sign language translator was not hired within the defined timeframe. At the beginning of 2022, the SCA started the search for a sign language translator and a contract was signed by May 2022	
STAGE 2 Translating information provided on the website to sign language (video materials regarding issues of high public interest) and providing respective subtitles.	03.2021	Permanent	Substantially Completed Starting from 2022, interviews on the SCA website www.sca.ge and youtube channels are published with subtitles. ²⁰	

²⁰ SCA YouTube channel is available here:
<https://bit.ly/39GEUnV>

STAGE 3 Holding meetings with interpretation in sign language (after assessing specific needs).	01.2021	Permanent	Substantially Completed On April 6, 2022, a public presentation of the new platform chaerte.sca.ge was held with the participation of a sign language translator. ²¹
Hindering Factors	The fulfilment of the first stage of the commitment was delayed due to the shortage of sign language specialists in the region and restrictions applied to physical meetings (which made the search for a translator less urgent).		
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Starting from 2022, interviews on the SCA website and youtube channels are published with subtitles; The presentation of the new platform chaerte.sca.ge was held with the participation of a sign language translator. 		
Future Steps	The budget was revised to accommodate the hiring of a sign language translator to translate SCA meetings, activities, and events.		

CONTACT INFORMATION	
Lead Agency	Media and Public Relations Department
Responsible Individuals (position)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feride Ustiashvili - Head of Department Suzana Vashakmadze - Head of Media Relations and Information Division Tsira Khajishvili – the Head of Citizen Engagement Division
E-mail and office phone number	E-mail: ustiashvilif@gmail.com suzi_vashackmadze@sca.ge tel: 032 2 28 54 90 032 2 28 54 79
Other Actors	Ministries, Departments/ Authority
	Civil Society Organizations, Public Sector, International Organizations, Working Groups
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UN Development Programme (UNDP) Georgia Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI)

²¹ [chaerte.sca.ge](https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=648044119592129) public presentation video is available here:
https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=648044119592129



COMMITMENT 9:

ELECTRONIC SYSTEM FOR ISSUING A PASS TO ENTER THE BUILDING OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL AND ATTEND ITS SESSIONS

Commitment implementation initiation and completion date
(September 2020 – April 2022)

Lead Agency	The Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara (SCA)			
COMMITMENT DESCRIPTION				
Which civil issue does the commitment relate to?	<p>Following shortcomings were identified on the SCA website:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It does not display information for individuals on making appointments with SCA members; 2. It does not display information on reception hours and schedules; 3. The website does not provide a function to enable individuals to make an appointment with a member or to send them a question/opinion; 4. It does not provide a possibility of making obtaining entrance permits electronically; 5. The building is not adapted to persons with disabilities (PwDs), which obstructs the process of obtaining the pass; 6. Individuals are unable to obtain a pass in advance to avoid visiting the Entry Pass Office prior to entering the building; 7. Safety measures for COVID-19 require limiting physical contacts to the minimum while visiting the Entry Pass Office increases the number of contacts, and, consequently, creates additional health-related risks. There is no alternative mechanism for similar situations. 			
Commitment fulfilment status	NOT INITIATED	LIMITED IMPLEMENTATION	SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETED	COMPLETED
Commitment stage/indicator fulfilment status	date of initiation:	Date of completion	Indicator fulfilment status	
STAGE 1 Preparation of draft amendments to the Rules of Procedure regarding attendance at plenary sessions.	09.2020	10.2020	Completed An amendment was introduced to the Rules of Procedure and rules on attendance were determined. ²²	
STAGE 2 Developing and approving the rules on making appointments electronically.	09.2020	10.2020	Completed Adopting this rule was deemed unnecessary as platform chaerte.sca.ge enables making appointments electronically, and this requirement was included in the website creation tender conditions. ²³ Module – Make an appointment with an MP. ²⁴	

²² In April 2021, members of the SCA (Davit Gabaidze, Vladimer Mgaloblishvili, Marine Gvianidze, Davit Batsikadze, Irakli Chavleishvili, Tite Aroshidze) proposed an amendment draft for the Rules of Procedure (№09-01-08/12, 01.04.2021). The amendment made to Paragraph 1 of Article 79 of the Rules of Procedure defined the list of individuals allowed to the open plenary meeting of the SCA. Thus, accredited media and members of the public will now be able to attend public sessions. The SCA made a decision to adopt the amendment during the SCA session on 20 May 2021 through simplified procedures - one hearing (28-II, 20.05.2021). For the amendments introduced into the Rules of Procedure refer to the link below: <https://bit.ly/39w460c>

²³ Tender details on the creation of the website announced by IDFI: <https://bit.ly/3ye2vGT>

²⁴ Module – make an appointment with an MP: <https://chaerte.sca.ge/ge/deputy-meetings>

<p>STAGE 3</p> <p>Developing rules for issuing passes electronically (as a concept).</p>	09.2020	10.2020	<p>Completed</p> <p>As tender conditions for the creation of the new web platform "chaerte.sca.ge" described the procedures for applying for an entry pass, it became necessary to introduce additional rules.²⁵</p> <p>Module - Request a pass electronically.²⁶</p>
<p>STAGE 4</p> <p>Approving amendments to the Rules of Procedure and additional procedures.</p>	10.2020	12.2020	<p>Completed</p> <p>There was no necessity to make changes to the procedures of the electronic system for entering the building, attending the meetings, and issuing passes, as the relevant modules of the chaerte.sca.ge (request to attend the committee meeting, request to attend the plenary session, request an electronic permit and make an appointment) already entails certain rules and procedures, corresponding to the objective of stage 4 of this commitment.</p> <p>Amendments necessary for implementing the commitment were introduced to the Rules of Procedure: in particular, paragraph 1 of Article 78 determined the list of individuals allowed to the meeting (28-II , 20.05.2021). No additional rules on entering the building and issuing the pass were deemed necessary as the platform chaerte.sca.ge modules (request a permit to attend the meeting, request attendance on the plenary session, request a pass electronically, make an appointment with MP), already entail rules and procedures corresponding with the objective of stage 4 of this commitment. In addition, the criteria for this module were defined under tender conditions as well.²⁷</p>
<p>STAGE 5</p> <p>Incorporating a new function into the SCA's website for making an appointment, technical support for issuing a pass electronically (via SMS, App or other means).</p>	10.2020	12.2020	<p>Completed</p> <p>The new platform chaerte.sca.ge includes new functionals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Using an appointment function sends a notification to the MP, assistant, and individual; ● Notification on the requested electronic pass is sent to the MP, citizen, and a person responsible for the approval and rejection of the pass.
<p>STAGE 6</p> <p>Communicating information regarding the electronic system for appointments and rules on attending SCA plenary sessions with relevant staff and, if necessary, providing training.</p>	10.2020	12.2020	<p>Completed</p> <p>The creative team of "Artmedia" LLC presented to the staff of the SCA the details about the electronic services provided on the platform chaerte.sca.ge (making an appointment with an MP, requesting a pass electronically, attending the plenary session, etc.).</p> <p>Several meetings were organized including online via ZOOM (on 17 and 24 January 2022) and physically at the office of "Artmedia" LLC in Tbilisi (on 15 February 2022).</p>

²⁵ Website creation tender details: <https://bit.ly/3P0qHLL>

²⁶ Module - request an online pass: <https://chaerte.sca.ge/ge/passes/create>

²⁷ SCA Facebook post regarding amendments: <https://bit.ly/38606mQ>

<p>STAGE 7</p> <p>Publishing information on attending SCA sessions separately on the website (alongside a simplified version).</p>	12.2020	01.2022	<p>Completed</p> <p>Key functionals, including the option - attend the meeting appear on the main pane of the web-portal chaerte.sca.ge.²⁸</p> <p>Under the menu – Online Services – functionals for attending plenary and committee meetings are displayed separately and are accompanied by general information on rules and procedures for using the service.</p> <p>Module - Request attendance at the plenary meeting.²⁹</p> <p>Module - Request attendance at the committee meeting.³⁰</p>
<p>STAGE 8</p> <p>Launching a pilot version of the system for making appointments and obtaining entrance permits electronically.</p>	12.2020	01.2022	<p>Completed</p> <p>Functionals for making an appointment and issuing an electronic pass are working in a test mode.</p> <p>Module - Request a pass electronically.³¹</p> <p>Module – Make an appointment with MP.³²</p>
<p>STAGE 9</p> <p>Finalize the implementation of the system for making appointments and obtaining entrance permits electronically.</p>	03.2021	01.2022	<p>Completed</p> <p>The system chaerte.sca.ge introduced the modules for making an appointment and issuing an electronic pass which now operates in a test mode.</p> <p>Individuals are using the services and the system works properly.³³</p>
<p>Hindering Factors</p>	<p>Certain stages of the commitment were fulfilled with delay, which was caused by financial issues.</p>		
<p>Outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Separate functions were added to the main menu of the Supreme Council of Ajara's web-portal chaerte.sca.ge: Contact the Supreme Council of Ajara³⁴ and Make an Appointment; ● Using the appointment function sends the request to the relevant MP and the individual;³⁵ ● An electronic pass system is implemented;³⁶ ● Individuals use the electronic pass functional. However, as the platform was launched in 2022, the number of requests is not high so far;³⁷ ● A relevant amendment to the Rules of Procedure on attendance at the plenary session of the SCA was introduced; ● Rules on the attendance at SCA's plenary sessions were published on the main pane of the web-platform chaerte.sca.ge, and under the menu Online Services (attend plenary session/attend committee session). ● The rule on attending the plenary session of the SCA has been approved and citizens can now participate in the session upon request. 		

²⁸ Civil engagement platform: <https://chaerte.sca.ge/>

²⁹ Module – attend plenary meeting: <https://chaerte.sca.ge/ge/sessions-plenary>

³⁰ Module – attend committee meeting: <https://chaerte.sca.ge/ge/sessions-committee>

³¹ Module- request a pass electronically: <https://chaerte.sca.ge/ge/passes/create>

³² Module – make an appointment with MP: <https://chaerte.sca.ge/ge/deputy-meetings>

³³ Information on the first petition is available here: <https://bit.ly/3ye1oXq>; information on the study tour is available here: <https://bit.ly/3KGBu15>

³⁴ Module – contact Supreme Council of Ajara: <https://chaerte.sca.ge/ge/contact-supreme/form>

³⁵ Module – make an appointment with MP: <https://chaerte.sca.ge/ge/deputy-meetings>

³⁶ Module – request a pass electronically: <https://chaerte.sca.ge/ge/passes/create>

³⁷ Module – request a pass electronically: <https://chaerte.sca.ge/ge/passes/create>

Future Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Based on the implemented practice, web functions will be further used and updated; ● Considering the feedback principles, new recommendations may be introduced to the rules for attending sessions.
---------------------	---



CONTACT INFORMATION	
Lead Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Constitutional, Legal and Procedural Issues Committee of the SCA ● Legal and Human Resources Management Department of the SCA ● Public and Media Relations Department of the SCA ● Organization and Administration Department
Responsible Individuals (position)	<p>Paata Keshelava - <i>Head of Constitutional, Legal, and Procedural Issues Committee</i></p> <p>Vazha Tsetskhladze - <i>Head of Legal and Human Resources Management Department</i></p> <p>Feride Ustiashvili - <i>Head of Department</i></p> <p>Suzana Vashakmadze - <i>Head of Media Relations and Information Division</i></p> <p>Tsira Khajishvili - <i>Head of Citizen Engagement Division</i></p>
E-mail and office phone number	
E-mail: ustiashvilif@gmail.com , suzi_vashackmadze@sca.ge	
Other Actors	Ministries, Departments/ Authority
	Civil Society Organizations, Public Sector, International Organizations, Working Groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● UN Development Programme (UNDP) Georgia ● Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) 	



COMMITMENT 10:

INTERNET TRANSMISSION OF THE SESSIONS OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF AJARA AND ITS BODIES AND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

Commitment implementation initiation and completion date
(September 2020 – February 2022)

Lead Agency	The Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara (SCA)			
COMMITMENT DESCRIPTION				
Which civil issue does the commitment relate to?	<p>Sessions of the SCA, its Committees and Bureau are not transmitted live on TV broadcasters and individuals are not able to keep updated about the sessions. Since May 2020, the SCA has been transmitting plenary sessions live on its Facebook page (these videos or a respective archive are not uploaded on the website). Several hundred people viewed these live streams. However, other types of sessions were not streamed. Additionally, SCA Rules of Procedure do not envisage interactive communication with individuals during these live streams (by accepting comments, responding or other means).</p> <p>Moreover, the plenary session and Bureau rooms (where sessions of the Bureau and, oftentimes, sessions of the Committees are held) cannot fit a large group of individuals.</p>			
Commitment fulfilment status	NOT INITIATED	LIMITED IMPLEMENTATION	SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETED	COMPLETED
Commitment stage/indicator fulfilment status	date of initiation:	Date of completion	Indicator fulfilment status	
STAGE 1 Adjusting the Rules of Procedure to enable live transmission of sessions and determine the ways of responding to individuals' questions	09.2020	05.2021	Completed Relevant amendments were introduced to the Rules of Procedure that enable live transmission of sessions and response to the questions and comments of the individuals.	
STAGE 2 Assessing technical needs for transmitting the sessions of the SCA and its bodies and preparing the respective budget.	05 2021	Ongoing	Limited Implementation Meetings of the Bureau, Committees and other bodies are transmitted live (at least on Facebook live streams); (Meetings transmitted on Facebook live stream are available on the Facebook webpage of the SCA). ³⁸ However, the main objective of the commitment – a high-quality broadcast was not fulfilled. At the same time, internet transmission of the Committee meetings is not performed yet.	
STAGE 3 Preparing Terms of Reference (ToR) for equipping the session rooms of the SCA and its Bureau with internet for live transmission.	05.2021	09.2021	Completed ToR on equipping relevant spaces with audio/visual systems has been prepared. (N1500 Giorgi Beridze letter to the Head of the SCA Staff)	

³⁸ Videos published on the SCA Facebook webpage:
<https://www.facebook.com/supremecouncil.ge/videos>

<p>STAGE 4 Allocation of budgetary resources for high-quality transmission on the website and attracting additional funds for 2021.</p>	05.2021	09.2021	<p>Completed Funds are allocated to purchase relevant technical equipment. (Decision of SCA N84). ToR was prepared and the budget was allocated at the end of 2021.</p>
<p>STAGE 5 Conducting public procurement.</p>	–	–	<p>Not Started The tender has not been announced; no funds have been allocated in the budget for 2022.</p>
<p>STAGE 6 Creating a transmission system</p>	05.2021	09.2021	<p>Substantially Completed Technical support for the plenary meeting live streams has been provided.</p>
<p>STAGE 7 Providing online transmission of plenary sessions as well as sessions of the Bureau and Committees; institutionalization and promotion of the practice of Q&A during committee sessions and its promotion.</p>	05.2021	Ongoing	<p>Limited Implementation Only plenary sessions are streamed live.</p>



Hindering Factors	<p>The SCA has allocated the relevant funds required for the purchase of equipment needed for live streams and the budget has been approved. However, the tender was not announced promptly. As the implementation of budget changes during the pre-election period for the 2021 local self-government elections was limited, the mobilization of necessary funds from the budget at the expense of savings in the first half of the year was not possible, and the remaining period was not enough for the tender process.</p> <p>The web-portal Chaerte.sca.ge was created, which also facilitates online citizen engagement.</p>
Outcomes	<p>The web-portal chaerte.sca.ge – was created, where links to the plenary meeting live streams are provided.³⁹</p> <p>A market study was carried out and a ToR was prepared.</p>
Future Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The revision of budget and resources necessary for fulfilment; ● Tender announcement; ● Procurement of equipment required for live transmission.



CONTACT INFORMATION		
Lead Agency	Head of SCA Staff	
Responsible Individuals (position)	Zurab Tchurkveidze	
E-mail and office phone number	tel: 577 472 147 E-mail: ztchurkveidze@gmail.com	
Other Actors	Ministries, Departments/ Authority	Financial, Procurement and Technical Assistance Department of the SCA
	Civil Society Organizations, Public Sector, International Organizations, Working Groups	



³⁹ Module - attend plenary meetings: <https://chaerte.sca.ge/ge/sessions-plenary>

COMMITMENT 11:

UPLOADING DOCUMENTS ON THE WEBSITE OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF AJARA IN A MACHINE-READABLE FORMAT, INCREASING THE LIST OF INFORMATION TO BE PUBLISHED PROACTIVELY

Commitment implementation initiation and completion date
(September 2020 – April 2022)

Lead Agency	The SCA Staff: Media and Public Relations Department			
COMMITMENT DESCRIPTION				
Which civil issue does the commitment relate to?	<p>Many important documents are available on the SCA website, including legislative acts, draft acts, reports, minutes of sessions and others. However, a part of these documents is uploaded in a scanned format, which makes their search or further processing difficult and, in some cases, even impossible. Also uploaded in this format are draft legal acts which are crucial for external organizations to analyse, including civil society organizations (e.g. draft amendments to Property Management Law, 2019-2020 Action Plan of the Gender Equality Council, etc.). Additionally, scanned versions of the documents are large, which obstructs the proper functioning of the website.</p> <p>Documents were not published on the website in an open, machine-readable format (e.g. HTML/MS Word).</p> <p>The SCA decides on publishing information proactively based on a Resolution which enumerates the list of information to be published, responsible persons, standards and forms of obtaining public information, and other rules.</p>			
Commitment fulfilment status	NOT INITIATED	LIMITED IMPLEMENTATION	SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETED	COMPLETED
Commitment stage/ indicator fulfilment status	date of initiation:	Date of completion	Indicator fulfilment status	
<p>STAGE 1</p> <p>Introducing amendments to the relevant Resolution.</p>	09.2020	12.2021	<p>Substantially Completed</p> <p>On 11 May 2022, the Open Governance Council members initiated an SCA Resolution draft On Approval of the Rules and Conditions for the Proactive Publication of the Public Information and Standards for Requesting Public Information in an Electronic Format. This act increases the list of information to be published proactively. The draft includes up to 60 provisions, while the legislative act in force envisages the publication of only 29 types of documents. The commitment was not fulfilled in its determined timeframe. The underlying reason was the pandemic - periodic isolation of infected employees and their referral to COVID-19 clinics, which prevented the finalization of the draft document.</p>	

<p>STAGE 2</p> <p>Updating, analysing and categorizing the information published on the website, and selecting documents from 2016 to the present day for publication in a machine-readable format.</p>	09.2020	02.2021	<p>Completed</p> <p>Since 2014 the SCA website (www.sca.ge) has been publishing information, which is required to be published by the Resolution On Approval of the Rules and Conditions for the Proactive Publication of the Public Information and Standards for Requesting Public Information in an Electronic Format. ⁴⁰</p> <p>Part of the information published in the past 8 years, including legislative act drafts, laws and decisions has been transferred to the archive. Going through every archived document and publication and uploading them into a machine-readable format requires extensive human resources, time and capabilities. Therefore, the information, which did not require additional resources, was selected. The selected information covers the period from 2014 (and not 2016, as required under the commitment) to the present day.</p> <p>Updated information on the website included financial resources and material assets (the SCA budget, public procurement, business visits, salaries, phone, fuel, and transportation maintenance costs, etc.); human resources expenses (orders regarding personnel lists, employees' personal and other information); statistical information (document turnover, gender statistics of the employees, the number of legal acts, etc.).</p>
<p>STAGE 3</p> <p>Publication of the information under the revised Resolution.</p>	01.2021	05.2021	<p>Limited Fulfillment</p> <p>Stage 3 was based on stage 1 – amendments made to the Rules of Procedure. Accordingly, proactive information is published based on the decision made in 2014 (Resolution of the SCA). ⁴¹</p>
<p>STAGE 4</p> <p>Publication of documents considered by the budget calendar/as well as other important documents in a simplified form.</p>	11.2020	05.2021	<p>Substantially Completed</p> <p>The budget draft and related documents submitted to the SCA were published in the archived ZIP format.</p> <p>Now, the draft budget of Ajara and related documents are uploaded in a simplified format (separately) ⁴².</p> <p>The budget for 2022⁴³ and an Annex on program implementation were published separately in 2022.⁴⁴</p>

⁴⁰ The Resolution of the Supreme Council of Ajara on the rules of proactive publication of public information and the approval of the standard for requesting public information in electronic form is available on the link below:
<https://bit.ly/39UBHkF>

⁴¹ Resolution on rules of proactive publication of the information and relevant amendments:
<https://bit.ly/3F9Y7dm>; <https://bit.ly/3vFIOHp>; <https://bit.ly/3vFkEf2>

⁴² Draft budget of Autonomous Republic of Ajara 2022 and list of priorities:
<https://bit.ly/384z7bk>

⁴³ Budget draft:
<https://bit.ly/3sdBUpr>

⁴⁴ Budget document:
<https://bit.ly/3MOY5Kp>

		<p>It was not possible to publish the financial document for 2022 in an infographic format, as it requires the analysis of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Key parameters of the budget; ● Budget revenues, taxes, grants, and other incomes; ● Budget expenditures, non-financial assets, and their functional classification; ● Budgetary priorities and programs; ● Budgetary allocations and program funding. <p>The preparation of infographics also required the hiring of a specialist with relevant technical skills and expertise, or retraining of the staff. This required additional financial and human resources. Against the backdrop of the pandemic, these costs were considered excessive and the publication of budget documents in a machine-readable format was considered sufficient.</p>
Hindering Factors	Even though the work on the amendments regarding the information to be published proactively was initiated and several versions of the information list were produced, the agreement could not be achieved. The final version of the amendments was not prepared and hindering factors included the pandemic and remote working conditions.	
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The information published proactively since 2014 (following the entry into force of the relevant resolution) has been updated and it is now fully available in a machine-readable format (word, excel); ● The draft budget and additional materials were published as separate documents on the website and are now easy to access; ● The draft budget of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara for 2022 was published as a separate document and additional information on the programs was published in the form of an Annex; ● The draft of amendments to the resolution on the information to be published proactively has been prepared. 	
Future Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The commitment was fulfilled in a limited manner and is therefore recommended to include in the new Action Plan; ● The list of information to be published was updated based on the new amendment; ● Work continues to allocate funds for infographics and publish them on the website. 	



CONTACT INFORMATION	
Lead Agency	Media and Public Relations Department
Responsible Individuals (position)	Feride Ustiashvili - <i>Head of Department</i> Suzana Vashakmadze - <i>Media Relations and Information Division</i>
E-mail and office phone number	E-mail: ustiashvilif@gmail.com , suzi_vashackmadze@sca.ge
Other Actors	Ministries, Departments/Authority
	Civil Society Organizations, Public Sector, International Organizations, Working Groups
	Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI)

COMMITMENT 12:

PUBLIC REPORTS OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF THE AUTONOMOUS REPUBLIC OF AJARA, ITS BODIES AND MEMBERS

Commitment implementation initiation and completion date

(September 2020 – April 2022)

Lead Agency	The SCA Open Governance Council, Constitutional, Legal and Procedural Issues Committee			
COMMITMENT DESCRIPTION				
Which civil issue does the commitment relate to?	Under the Rules of Procedure of the SCA, only its Committees and consultative bodies are responsible to report on their activities. The Law does not prescribe the duty of the SCA or its members to report in a similar manner. The Rules of Procedure also fail to stipulate that such reports shall be published and accessible electronically (except for Committee reports). Additionally, they do not require SCA members to present reports. Moreover, the current procedure does not require presenting the reports to the public or civil society organizations, which particularly impedes the proper and timely provision of information about the SCA and its activities to the population of Ajara's mountainous regions.			
Commitment fulfilment status	NOT INITIATED	LIMITED IMPLEMENTATION	SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETED	COMPLETED
Commitment stage/indicator fulfilment status	date of initiation:	Date of completion	Indicator fulfilment status	
STAGE 1 Introducing rules and timeframes for presenting reports into the SCA Rules of Procedure.	09.2020	05.2021	Completed The amendment to the SCA Rules of Procedure established the duty of annual reporting for the SCA and its members. ⁴⁵	
STAGE 2 Development of a format and issues recommended for the reports of the SCA, its Members and bodies (issues, necessary information, etc.).	02.2022	02.2022	Completed Guiding recommendations and templates for SCA members and structural units were prepared at the beginning of 2022.	
STAGE 3 Development of training/ orientation courses on preparing and presenting reports for Members and staff. Training of Members and their assistants where applicable (desirably with Partners' support).	02.2022	03.2022	Completed In March 2022, SCA Members, their assistants, committee staff members and relevant staff of the SCA received training on the preparation of a report. The training was made possible with the support of donor and partner organizations. 71% of the staff and members/assistants were retrained. ⁴⁶	

⁴⁵ Amendment to the SCA Rules of Procedure:
<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/5172592>

⁴⁶ Information on the trainings published by IDFI:
<https://bit.ly/3vI9UfP>

STAGE 4 Development of a schedule of public reports for members of the SCA and its bodies.	–	–	Not Started The Schedule of public reports for SCA members and its bodies has not been developed yet.
STAGE 5 Presentation of SCA members' reports to the public (via meetings held either in person or electronically) and publication of the reports on the website in a machine-readable format.	–	–	Not Started Reports of SCA members have not been published yet.
STAGE 5 Presentation of reports of Committees and Consultative Councils to the public (via meetings held either in person or electronically) and publication of reports on the website in a machine-readable format.	10.2021	04.2022	Limited Fulfillment The Committee reports were published in a machine-readable format. However, a physical and/or online presentation has not been held so far. Consultative bodies have not provided their reports yet.
Hindering Factors	The fulfilment of the commitment and its stages was delayed due to pandemic restrictions. This included, in particular, that the planning of in-person meetings was delayed, and the existing reporting practice was not transferred into an electronic format. On the other hand, reaching a political agreement on the reporting timeframe appeared a complicated matter. The process was also hindered by delayed training of SCA members and relevant staff, and, consequently, other stages were delayed as well.		
Outcomes	The SCA has already established the duty applicable to all members, consultative bodies, and the council itself to publish reports. A section on the web-portal chaerte.sca.ge was dedicated to this issue. The majority of SCA members, all committees and the staff engaged in reporting were trained in report preparation and have been provided with informational guides and materials.		
Future Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The preparation of reports by relevant individuals and bodies; ● Organization of report presentation to the public and implementation of the practice. 		



CONTACT INFORMATION	
Lead Agency	SCA
Responsible Individuals (position)	Zurab Tchurkveidze
E-mail and office phone number	E-mail: ztchurkveidze@gmail.com Tel: 577 472 147
Other Actors	Ministries, Departments/Authority
	Civil Society Organizations, Public Sector, International Organizations, Working Groups
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● UN Development Programme (UNDP) Georgia ● Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI)

COMMITMENT 13:

DEVELOPING AND PUBLISHING COMMITTEE ACTION PLANS OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF AJARA

Commitment implementation initiation and completion date
(September 2020 – September 2021)

Lead Agency	The SCA Open Governance Council			
COMMITMENT DESCRIPTION				
Which civil issue does the commitment relate to?	<p>The Rules of Procedure of the SCA did not prescribe an obligation to develop Committee Action Plans. This issue has been emphasized as a challenge in the study carried out with the support of the joint EU-UNDP project "Consolidating Parliamentary Democracy in Georgia." The lack of obligation prevented the effective planning of committee activities, as well as monitoring, reporting and assessment of the progress achieved.</p> <p>Moreover, civil society organizations rarely engaged in SCA Committees' activities, which failed to ensure participatory and inclusive legislative and oversight processes.</p>			
Commitment fulfilment status	NOT INITIATED	LIMITED IMPLEMENTATION	SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETED	COMPLETED
Commitment stage/indicator fulfilment status	date of initiation:	Date of completion	Indicator fulfilment status	
STAGE 1 Considering the elaboration of the Committee Action Plans in the SCA Rules of Procedure.	09.2020	12.2020	Completed The duty to adopt a committee action plan is now reflected in the SCA Rules of Procedure. ⁴⁷	
STAGE 2 Training Committee staff on the specificities of Action Plans and issues related to their elaboration in a participatory manner	01.2021	03.2021	Completed In March 2021, the staff of all six committees were trained in the preparation of an action plan and participatory processes.	
STAGE 3 Commencement of the process of elaboration of Committees' action plans and involving the civil society in the process.	03.2021	06.2021	Completed In March-June of 2021, all six committees organized meetings, consultations and other activities which resulted in the development of the Action Plan 2021-2022. In June 2021, all six committees also organized public consultations with stakeholders to discuss action plan draft versions and receive feedback (the civil sector, the Government of Ajara, Municipalities and private sector representatives participated in the meetings (150 individuals in total).	
STAGE 4 Approving SCA Committee Action Plans.	06.2021	08.2021	Completed All six committees have approved and adopted action plans and these plans are published on the SCA website in a machine-readable format. ⁴⁸	

⁴⁷ Amendment to the SCA Rules of Procedure:
<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/5062984>

⁴⁸ SCA strategy, action plan, and concepts:
<http://sca.ge/geo/static/275>

Hindering Factors	The implementation of the commitment and its stages was delayed due to the restriction of in-person meetings including relevant training and consultations. The process was also affected by political events, in particular, opposition parties' boycotts hindered reaching decisions on certain issues.
Outcomes	All six committees of the SCA now have complete action plans for 2021-2022. Also, almost the entire composition of the committee staff participated in the action plan preparation process. They have gained considerable experience as they worked with a consultant with the donor support. All action plans were prepared with the active participation of the members of the committee apparatus and the consultant.
Future Steps	The process of developing the commitments and evaluation indicators under the new committee action plans should be refined with the active engagement of the stakeholders and the general public. Draft action plans, public consultation reports and final plans should be proactively published via different communication channels.



CONTACT INFORMATION	
Lead Agency	The SCA
Responsible Individuals (position)	Zurab Tchurkveidze
E-mail and office phone number	E-mail: ztchurkveidze@gmail.com Tel: 577 472 147
Other Actors	Ministries, Departments/Authority
	Civil Society Organizations, Public Sector, International Organizations, Working Groups
	UN Development Programme (UNDP) Georgia



COMMITMENT 14: OPEN DOOR DAY

Commitment implementation initiation and completion date
(September 2020 – March 2021)

Lead Agency	SCA			
COMMITMENT DESCRIPTION				
Which civil issue does the commitment relate to?	Ever since the SCA moved into one of the central areas of Batumi, there has been an expectation that its activities would entail more active citizen engagement. However, the interest in the legislative body of the region is not high. In addition, the attendance at sessions is extremely limited for individuals not only due to the size of the session room but also due to the absence of the relevant practice.			
Commitment fulfilment status	NOT INITIATED	LIMITED IMPLEMENTATION	SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETED	COMPLETED
Commitment stage/indicator fulfilment status	date of initiation:	Date of completion	Indicator fulfilment status	
STAGE 1 Developing and approving rules regulating open door days.	–	–	Not Started	
STAGE 2 Preparation of guidelines on setting the practice of open-door days and training employees	–	–	Not Started	
STAGE 3 Organising the first open door day event.	–	–	Not Started	
STAGE 4 Preparation and publication of minutes and a report regarding the open-door day event, publication of information on relevant responsive actions.	–	–	Not Started	
Hindering Factors	The commitment and its stages were not fulfilled due to the pandemic and restrictions on in-person meetings. As open-door day mainly includes field trips, rules and procedures for the organization of such activities in a remote manner had not been determined. The lack of technical resources represented a further hindrance. Thus, the commitment could not be fulfilled remotely.			

Outcomes	No outcomes were achieved as the commitment was not fulfilled.
Future Steps	Because of the pandemic, the method of the open-door day needs to be diversified. This includes the possibility of the organization of remote meetings. Therefore, new rules and procedures should be developed.



CONTACT INFORMATION	
Lead Agency	The SCA
Responsible Individuals (position)	Zurab Tchurkveidze
E-mail and office phone number	E-mail: ztchurkveidze@gmail.com Tel: 577 472 147
Other Actors	Ministries, Departments/Authority
	Civil Society Organizations, Public Sector, International Organizations, Working Groups

COMMITMENT 15: CSO DAY

Commitment implementation initiation and completion date
(December 2020 – November 2021)

Lead Agency	The SCA			
COMMITMENT DESCRIPTION				
Which civil issue does the commitment relate to?	The SCA does not have a tradition and experience of active cooperation with civil society. It does not hold regular meetings which would enable respective organizations to engage in the dialogue, discuss partnership opportunities and, at the same time, would increase the transparency and accountability of the Council.			
Commitment fulfilment status	NOT INITIATED	LIMITED IMPLEMENTATION	SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETED	COMPLETED
Commitment stage/indicator fulfilment status	date of initiation:	Date of completion	Indicator fulfilment status	
STAGE 1 Signing a declaration between the SCA and civil society	–	–	Not Started	
STAGE 2 Organizing the first meeting by the SCA Open Governance Council.	–	–	Not Started	
STAGE 3 Preparing a report on the meeting and publishing it on the website.	–	–	Not Started	
Hindering Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The commitment and its stages were not fulfilled due to the pandemic and the boycott of the opposition, as well as restrictions on in-person meetings; ● An agreement was not reached on a specific date. 			
Outcomes	No outcomes were achieved as the commitment was not fulfilled.			
Future Steps	The SCA should plan the format for regular meetings with the civil sector and develop necessary rules and procedures.			



CONTACT INFORMATION	
Lead Agency	The SCA
Responsible Individuals (position)	Zurab Tchurkveidze
E-mail and office phone number	E-mail: ztchurkveidze@gmail.com Tel: 577 472 147
Other Actors	Ministries, Departments/Authority
	Civil Society Organizations, Public Sector, International Organizations, Working Groups





COOPERATION
with INTERNATIONAL
PARTNERS AND
EXPERIENCE
SHARING

Notably, Ajara is not a member of the local Open Governance Partnership network - OGP Local. However, the achievements of the Supreme Council with respect to open governance (for example, preparation of the action plan through a collaborative process, strengthening of institutional effectiveness and aspirational commitments, to improve transparency and citizen engagement) attracted the attention of other states. Based on the request from the OGP Support Division an online meeting was held on 10 June 2021 with the following participants: OGP Eastern Partnership Program coordinator, Marina Mkhitariani; chairperson of the SCA, Davit Gabaidze; and the head of Administration Zurab Tchurkveidze. Davit Gabaidze presented the information on the implementation of open governance principles in council activities and introduced action plan commitments and key priorities. He also expressed willingness to join the OGP Local network and the parties discussed the plans for Ajara's official membership in the OGP Local. Ms Mkhitariani promised Mr Gabaidze support in aspects such as sharing international practice and implementation of the OGP principles in the Ajara region; also, showcasing own practice with international partners of the regional legislative body.





CONCLUSION,
OTHER
INITIATIVES and
FUTURE STEPS

The Supreme Council of Ajara has taken significant steps to implement open governance. These measures, implemented over two years, can bring actual benefits to the public.

The openness of the Supreme Council during the development of the Action Plan represented a key prerequisite for ensuring that the plan turned out inclusive and tailored to the local needs. Despite pandemic-related challenges, the SCA actively cooperated with the civil sector and managed to ensure close coordination in accordance with the open governance principles. As a result, the plan included a number of commitments proposed by the civil sector.

Notably, active cooperation continued during the Action Plan implementation process: multiple commitments and activities were fulfilled through joint efforts of the SCA and its partners; innovations were introduced and works were completed (including infrastructural activities). As a result, the Supreme Council of Ajara today is a more open institution than ever before.

The process of Action Plan development revealed a number of challenges too. The long duration of the pandemic had a negative impact on various processes. The post-election political situation created further complications and caused a non-fulfilment of a number of commitments (for instance, it was impossible to organize meetings with relevant participants, partners were hesitant to engage in the process, time was required to achieve political diversity, etc.). Consequently, the fulfilment of this aspirational plan became a challenge for the SCA. However, the SCA was able to overcome these obstacles with the support of partner and donor organizations (but the timeframe determined under the action plan was not sufficient).

In the process of ensuring institutional openness, the Supreme Council managed to mobilize in a various manner and carry out separate initiatives beyond the Action Plan. For instance, its engagement in gender equality processes improved with the support of donor organizations; it implemented activities for institutional strengthening (this also encompassed increased citizen engagement in oversight mechanisms); the Supreme Council prepared institutional and communication strategies for 2021-2024, including additional action plans. These documents cover various matters related to open governance. Based on these documents, a structural unit with the mandate pertaining to strategic development and international relations was designated as well. This unit focuses on the issues of open governance. With this approach, the SCA signalled that open governance will always be a top priority and the SCA will continue working in this direction with sustainable approaches.

The Supreme Council of Ajara also works on raising awareness and strengthening public relations and closely cooperates with the media in various areas. This includes the following matters of openness as a priority: active dialogues on the petition mechanism, the citizen engagement platform or other issues (in the media, as well as in public meetings). These activities highlight the importance of these topics and create an opportunity to attract public attention to the application of implemented mechanisms.

Currently, the Supreme Council of Ajara is starting the process to develop a new action plan. The SCA is undertaking internal and external activities with this aim and has organized meetings with the staff, students and the civil sector. As a result, the next action plan on open governance is planned to be approved with public participation by July 2022. The document will focus on advancing the standards for the transparency, accountability, engagement, and innovative development of the SCA. The plan will take into account the lessons learned and challenges encountered in the process covering the previous Action Plan.

The open governance reform of the Supreme Council enabled the implementation of technological innovations and changes to the internal system. The process clearly showed the benefits of cooperating with the civil sector - not only in the preparatory processes related to the action plan but also in its implementation based on the partnership principles. As a result, the experience of the Supreme Council has attracted the attention of international partners and even OGP. Structural changes implemented by the SCA will facilitate the systematic implementation of open governance and a further improvement in the future.



აჭარის ავტონომიური რესპუბლიკის უმაღლესი საბჭო
Supreme Council of Autonomous Republic of Ajara







აჭარის ავტონომიური რესპუბლიკის უმაღლესი საბჭო
Supreme Council of Autonomous Republic of Ajara

**The Supreme Council
of the Autonomous
Republic of Ajara**

SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT ON
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
OPEN GOVERNANCE ACTION PLAN



This report was developed with the support of the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and in cooperation with the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI). Open Governance Council of the Supreme Council of Ajara is responsible for the content of this report and it may not reflect the visions of the European Union (EU), UNDP or the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information.