Bringing Wine to the US: an interview with Mamuka Tsereteli, former President of the Georgian Association of the USA (2006-2016); President of America-Georgian Business Council and a founder of the Georgian Wine House import business based in Washington DC Area



Respondent
Mamuka Tsereteli

Interviewer
Stephen F. Jones

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Introduction

Mamuka Tsereteli, the founder of Georgian Wine House, reflects on wine's role in introducing Georgian culture in the United States. Tsereteli has been involved in the wine import business since 2005, and speaks about his immigration experience as a diplomat which began in Washington, DC in 1994, leading to his involvement in the America Georgia Business Council, Georgian Association in the USA, and Georgian Wine House.

Mamuka Tsereteli has given fascinating seminars on Georgian wine, such as The History and Politics of Georgian Wine, and other topics pertinent to Georgia's geopolitical situation at the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies. Please view his Davis Center profile here.

Stephen Jones: My name is Stephen Jones. I am the founding director of the program on Georgian Studies at the Davis Center at Harvard and I'm currently a professor of Modern History at Ilia State University, and I am interviewing Mamuka Tsereteli, a senior fellow for Eurasia at the American Foreign Policy Council and a senior fellow with the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. Also, he is president of the America Georgia Business Council and founder of the Georgian Wine House, a wine importer housed in Greater Washington. Mamuka, thanks for agreeing to the interview. I'm going to ask you some questions, and feel free to improvise as much as you want. Please introduce yourself and tell us about your life in Georgia before you came to the United States, a little bit about your own case.

Mamuka Tsereteli: Thanks, Steven. I, like most of the Georgians at that time, went to a regular school. I was born in Tbilisi, as people called at that time, the Voronstov area, grew up for few years in Didube, not far from Didube church. And then we moved closer to Vake Park on Titsian Tabidze Street, and that's where I lived for most of my life in Georgia.

Stephen Jones: So, didn't you go to Moscow State University?

Mamuka Tsereteli: I went to Tbilisi State University to study social and economic geography, focused on Oriental countries, but also, pf course, on Georgia and other parts of the former Soviet Union space. And after graduating, I went to Moscow to do PhD in economics. It was '86 to 1989 - interesting time of a perestroika era. I did study at what was called the Institute of Economics and Forecasting of the National Economy. And it was part of the Academy of Sciences.

Stephen Jones: Was that a common path for good students at Tbilisi State - that they would then go on to do a postgraduate degree in Moscow or in Leningrad?

Mamuka Tsereteli: It was pretty popular for some who wanted to go into deeper academic education. Some people would stay in Tbilisi as well for their education, and some academic schools in Georgia were very advanced. But some of us went to other parts of the Soviet Union. Moscow obviously, was the major destination, but also Saint Petersburg (Leningrad at that time). Kiev, Odessa.

Stephen Jones: Was there an option at that time to study abroad?

Mamuka Tsereteli: Not much. No. There were some, maybe. If I were, let's say a physicist, or in other fields of hard science, like mathematician, maybe I could go to, let's say to Germany, the Eastern Germany though. The University of Jena (East Germany) had some connection at that time with Tbilisi State. I remember people went to some Eastern European universities, but it was very rare. I think there were some exceptions and some Georgians would get post graduate education

in Western countries as well, but it would be extremely rare. Yeah, there were not many options, although by the end of *perestroika*, actually, at the end of my study in Moscow, there was an option for me to go to Harvard for one year, it was early 1989, but being 26 years old and already being married and having a son, I thought I was too old to go, and I was not confident enough to do an English language education at that time. One year, very interesting program in economics at Harvard University. I had that option, and I missed that opportunity. But frankly, I have no regrets. Spanding time with my wife and newly born son was more important, and I am happy the way everything happened.

Stephen Jones:
Yeah, of course. So, you ended up as a diplomat…

Mamuka Tsereteli: In 1994 I was invited to join the first Georgian Embassy team to Washington.

Stephen Jones: Tell us about how you ended up as a diplomat.

Mamuka Tsereteli: After doing my economics degree, I went back, worked at the research institution, and then joined the staff of the Parliament of Georgia in 1992 at the Budget Committee. It was the probably the most unsuccessful period of my career, between 1992 1994. I was working at Budget Committee, and budget was a big mess. That was a time when *coupons, a temporary currency* was introduced in Georgia, and they failed. The parliament didn't have much role or impact on the process, but as a part of the budget committee staff, I was kind of indirectly responsible. To answer your question, I knew very well the national security team of President Shevardnadze, led by Tedo Japaridze, who was appointed as an ambassador to the US in 1994. And most of the members of the team were my friends and colleagues, former geographers: Levan Mikeladze, Giga Makharadze, David Soumbadze and others. They needed somebody with expertise in economics, and they asked me to join the embassy team, and that's how I ended up joining the embassy. My initial responsibilities included handling of the international financial institutions (IMF, WB), as well as some organizational and financial issues, and gradually also relationships with the energy and other businesses, with the government agencies, assistance programs and so forth.

Stephen Jones: So when? When did you come to the USA? What year was that?

Mamuka Tsereteli: It was November 20 of 1994 when we landed in Dallas airport: my wife Maia, young Giorgi, five years old, and myself. Sandro, our second son was born in the US later, in 2000.

Stephen Jones: That was your first visit to the US?

Mamuka Tsereteli: That was my first visit to the US.

Stephen Jones: So how long did you spend in the embassy?

Mamuka Tsereteli: It was after three and a half years I left the embassy. I think it was already June of 1998 when I joined the America Georgia Business Council as a founding executive director.

Stephen Jones: Tell us about those first three and a half four years as a diplomat. This was an extraordinary period. Georgia had just become independent; you were establishing relations for the first time with the United States. I am sure at that time, there were very few Georgians in Washington, DC. What was the community like of Georgians in Washington, DC, or in other places in the United States at that time?

Mamuka Tsereteli: The community was very small. Of course, you're right. There were some immigrants from previous generations, and some of the newer generations. Environment and perceptions about Georgia were very negative at that time. There were several reasons for that. One was obviously the 1991 coup and all the related military hostilities in Georgia, a civil war had its impact on perceptions in Washington in general, and among immigrants as well. Supporters and opponents of the former president Zviad Gamsakhurdia and that government, were present in Washington, DC. Some of them obviously were very negative towards the Shevardnadze government, which we were indirectly part of, because we were diplomats under his government. There was negative publicity related to that, and negative publicity related to Georgia's military confrontations in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region. There was a negative publicity creating the image of Georgia as a place where nobody is tolerated. Even Georgians cannot tolerate each other, how they can tolerate anybody else? Russian perspectives were influential, and even dominant in Washington. No positive articles in newspapers anywhere at that time. *Washington Post*, *New York Times* were dominant opinion makers in the United States, as well as *Wall Street Journal*, but nobody really wrote anything positive about Georgia, until probably 1996. Because of some reforms which started happening in Georgia since 1995 in economic development with the participation of the World Bank and IMF. So, there were positive reactions to some of the changes in Georgia at that time. But in terms of community, there was Voice of America and their employees, we knew some of them, they were coming to some of our events, and we were going to see them - family parties etc. Always some visitors from Georgia, like students, fellows, since 1994 through different programs. There were some of the members of community that we knew from Georgia, Father Michael, currently head priest at Kashveti, at that time he was Misha Popkhadze from Voice of America, and his wife, Keti. Irakli Kakabadze with his American friends was a frequent guest to our home. Other Georgians who lived in Washington for extended periods, or temporary. But in general, small community.

Stephen Jones: What made you decide to stay after you finished your diplomatic mission in DC?

Mamuka Tsereteli: Yeah, it's kind of interesting. We never planned to stay too long. Every year we were talking to each other at home that next year is our last year in the US. And even being in at the embassy, I was thinking that maybe it was time to go back. Now, it's a good time to go back. But there are a couple of reasons we stayed. One personal reason was that close friend and colleague, Georgian diplomat, was in prison at that time and we wanted to be around and support him. And then second reason was that I was offered to run this newly created organization called America Georgia Business Council. We actually created it together with Mr. Enders Wimbush, first president of the organization, and driving force behind the idea. Of course, embassy was very supportive and involved. My colleagues, Giga Makharadze and Tedo Japaridze were all involved in the development of this organization. We contacted James Baker, Secretary Baker, and he supported it, and he became the first honorary chairman of the organization. We formed this organization early 1998 and then Enders asked me to run it. So, it was a good transition for me both on a personal, as well as professional level. I was doing something interesting, which was in a sense, natural continuation of what I was doing at the embassy. The Council was focused on promotion of economic relationship between the US and Georgia, and on facilititaion of American investments into Georgia, including support for very important strategic projects for Georgia, like several pipelines, other energy projects. So, that's how it happened.

Stephen Jones: So, you said that in the 1990s when you were there in DC, things were pretty negative, until maybe 1996?

Mamuka Tsereteli: Improvements in terms of Georgian PR started to emerge in 1995-1996 and it was determined by reforms in Georgia. I will give a little detail - I knew the name of Gary Becker when I was doing my PhD in Moscow, he later became a Nobel Prize Laureate. And it was interesting that I met him in 1997 in person in Washington. He invited me for lunch at Cosmos club, because he was planning his trip with some of the Pritzker Family members to Georgia and to Uzbekistan. I helped him to plan his trip, and he went to Georgia and wrote an interesting article in 1998 about reforms in Georgia, and comparing them with the situation in Uzbekistan. I think it was published in Businessweek, and reforms in Georgia were assessed very positively, compared to Uzbekistan. Georgia was much more advanced in terms of economic reforms at that time. This story is reflective of a trend emerging with positive economic and political reforms in Georgia in late 90ies.

Stephen Jones: You were an observer of, let's say, the 1990s and then the early 2000s when you were in DC. Things were changing very rapidly in Georgia. It was still very hard to travel for Georgians for economic reasons, but the situation at home was bad and many Georgians were attempting to leave and to find work elsewhere. How did the Diaspora in DC from your observations, change? How did your life as a Georgian immigrant change in the United States in

the second half of the 1990s let's say, and through the early 2000s. What were your observations about the nature of the Diaspora at that time?

Mamuka Tsereteli: Washington, DC was not the most typical area for the diaspora migration. It may have changed a bit, but it remained mostly a magnet, sort of, or attraction for mostly professionals, mostly those were economics and medical professionals, lawyers, academia members, of course, some journalists working at the Voice of America. So, it was not a destination for blue color job seekers. Most of them went to New York, New Jersey, some other parts of U.S. with more job opportunities. While this was happening in this area (DC) as well, still, a significant number of people were coming to work, let's say, at the World Bank, at IMF and, and other kind of professional institutions. So, DC is from that point of view, slightly different, probably from other parts of US, in terms of the professional composition of immigrants. Although, in New York, everything was happening in parallel, it was magnet for a broader spectrum of people, professionals, white color workers, as well as blue color workers.

Stephen Jones: Tell me what you know, as you stayed in DC in the 2000s , about the Diaspora as it obviously was becoming more active, more numerous. What was your life like as a Georgian immigrant? How were you connected to the Diaspora, in what ways were you connected, and how important was it to your daily life there at that time?

Mamuka Tsereteli: I think, like every other Georgian in U.S., despite where they live, you have your own circle of friends and community, your own little Georgia, so these people are important for your life - People you meet with on social gatherings, on weekends. We, our family, are lucky to have good friends around.

Life in Washington was filled with some interesting things happening all the time. For example, at some point the Synetic Theater started to emerge at Church Street in DC, and some of the Georgian community members were gathering there all the time, and we were helping and supporting as much as we could at that time. There were Georgian Independence Day celebrations with the embassy. Then I started hosting events through America Georgia Business Council. Then with your participation, I became head of the Georgian Association and then I had to be, obviously, more proactive with the Diaspora community. These are kind of elements of life. Plus, every given moment, there were between five and 15 students or scholars visiting DC area. I've had an excellent relationship with many of them with whom I kind of became friends, and I helped them with their professional lives, and they found interesting careers. They're much more knowledgeable than me now, much more successful than I am, which is great. So, that was kind of interesting part of my life. Lots of those students and the young professionals visited our home, and Maia and I hosted them, and so we had this experience as well. In a sense, dealing with a younger generation of Georgians was always part of our life here in the US. That helped us lot to remain connected with Georgia.

Stephen Jones: Sorry to interrupt, Mamunka, but this is very interesting question, of course, for all immigrants, not just Georgian immigrants - how the community survives in a country which is, you know, putting great pressure on people to integrate and to become American, and yet each community wants to preserve what it can and the connections to its homeland. How did you feel, for example, about language and your children? What were your concerns about the preservation of their connections to Georgia? How did you deal with that?

Mamuka Tsereteli: That's very good question, very important question. Giorgi, our oldest son, he was five when we came to the US. Obviously, he spoke only Georgian at that time, but he never went to school in Georgia. He was too young for that, so we had to teach him how to write, how to read, at home. Maia started doing it in Georgia before we went to the U.S. But then he continued his education in the Georgian language, writing and reading. Obviously, language at home was always Georgian, and plus the Georgian community around us, obviously spoke Georgian. So, for him, it was not hard at all to maintain language skills, despite the fact that he went to English school, of course, and that most of his friends were all English-speaking, with some exceptions – he had some Georgian friends as well.

Obviously, it was harder with our second son, Sandro, who was born in 2000. There was almost 12-year difference between the two brothers, and Sandro, while he was growing up, he attempted to speak with his brother in English, but his brother and his parents prevented this from happening and the only language he could speak at home was Georgian. And then he also got home education in writing and reading. He reads and he writes despite the fact that, again, he was born in US and never went to school in Georgia. So, our home communication language is Georgian.

Sometimes people ask me, how did we manage to provide them with such good skills in Georgian. But I think this big age difference between two brothers was helpful, because sometimes when kids are about the same age, they have common circle of friends, and they start talk to each other in English. This didn't happen with us. We had enough age difference between the two. Plus, of course, effort from home, it's very important. Parents, sometimes they feel more comfortable talking to their children in English because it helps them to exercise their English. In our case, we didn't do it. Maybe it affected our ability to speak better English, but at least, our kids speak Georgian very well.

Stephen Jones: Wise decision, Mamuka. Was there any other support system in place in DC at that time for (your family)

Mamuka Tsereteli: Not at that time, really. It was mostly my wife's, Maia's effort at home. While she is an artist by education, she also has excellent language skills and co-authored two important publications, one of them on Georgian verb. So, we had professional language guide at home. In

terms of the community support, later in 2000s when the Georgian church community started to grow, there were attempts to organize educational meetings, and then we, as a Georgian Association, supported also a Georgian School around the Georgian church. Although, our children were already grown up by that time, they didn't go to those schools. But now there are some educational institutions that help young Georgian kids. But at that time, it was mostly home effort.

Stephen Jones: So, I'm going to shift from your legacy as one of the early Georgian immigrants, - you were important, a linchpin in in the community in DC. I want to talk about your experience with food now and wine. Let me just first ask you in DC, were there any eateries or restaurants? When did the first Georgian restaurant open in DC? Do you remember?

Mamuka Tsereteli: What I remember is that there was a restaurant, not Georgian, but half-owned by famous Georgian singer, Zurab Tsikaridze. He was a co-owner with his wife at that time. They owned a restaurant called *Maxim* near the White House, and they served some Georgian food, also some Georgian wine. I think it was around 2001-2002, around that time. Georgian wine actually first occurred in Washington DC area a little earlier. There is a wonderful wine shop in Georgetown called Potomac Wines and Spirits, and they were first to carry Georgian wines, the produce of *Georgian Wines and Spirits company*. And then for a short period of time they also carried *Tbilvino* wines there. And I was obviously a big consumer. Their primary market was me, actually, at that time, with my events... but, restaurant-wise, that's what I recall. And of course, everyone cooked at home. And when Georgians wanted to brag about their food, it was mostly homemade food, so not the restaurant so much.

Stephen Jones: Here's a question then that gives you a little more philosophical input, perhaps. How important do you think that food and wine are in preserving some sense of Diasporic community? I mean, of course, the role of the *Supra*, the traditional feast in Georgia. It is extremely important in preserving history and culture. How did that work in a foreign country, did food and wine become more important in your life because you were in a foreign country with a small number of Georgians you were connected to? How did that work? And more generally, how important do you think this is, food and wine, because I've always thought of it as some element of soft power regarding Georgia's presence and its presence in the United States. Tell us your thoughts about that.

Mamuka Tsereteli: First of all, we cannot claim that food and wine for Georgians who live in the US is more important than food and wine for Georgians who live in Georgia. Everywhere Georgians are, food and wine are very important. Whether you are in Georgia or elsewhere, and it's an integral part of the social life, of cultural life of every Georgian. So, whether, you are inside of Georgia or somewhere else (does not matter). From that point of view, I think home-based, family-based, gatherings and dinners with the food and wine is more important than going into

restaurants when we talk about Georgian community. It is a way for Georgians to introduce their homeland to American friends and professional colleagues. But restaurants are becoming increasingly important for raising awareness about Georgia, not just food and wine, but about broader cultural heritage of Georgia. The number of Georgian restaurants is growing rapidly in the US, particularly in NY area. It's a boom. This process is clearly becoming a strong element of growth of awareness about Georgia.

You and I, we've done lot of things to promote Georgia in the US in different fields. And, I've had events when hundreds of people attended, and hundreds of my students attended my classes in different subjects, where Georgia was obviously part of the element of education, and we used this opportunity for awareness purposes about Georgia, but scale of what we covered through those events and activities and the scale of people we reached via wine and food is different. I mean, the audience we reached through wine and food, is exponentially larger than we could get to through other means, whether it's academic activity or business promotion. So, I think also that cultural elements in general, as well as sports have very special role, but food and wine, nothing can compare with that on a daily basis, I think.

Stephen Jones: Not only were you a Georgian immigrant, but you were also an immigrant trying to find your place in the United States. You were one of the founders of the America Georgia Business Council. You're currently the president of the council. But also, of course, you were heavily involved in in wine imports, and you were one of the founders of, or I'm not sure, maybe the main founder of the Georgian Wine House. Tell us about how you got involved in the wine business, and what obstacles you encountered, how difficult was it to get established as a wine import business in the United States.

Mamuka Tsereteli: Let's start with the how I got involved. Like every other Georgian I was always bragging that Georgia has one of the best wines, if not the best wines in the world. And that we are ancient, and we are the birthplace of wine, but there was not much wine available to really demonstrate that. And at some point, even those few decent items that were coming to the U.S. started to disappear. I had a couple of friends who at that point, were convinced that starting wine business would be successful enterprise, and so we started. They convinced me to join them and we started this business called Georgian Wine House, but the company's official name is Georgian House of Greater Washington.

I started this company with two Georgian friends and then several other friends, American, British and others, started to join us. There were group of seven, eight people initially involved, and most of these people were not looking for commercial success. They wanted to have this product available in U.S. to help producers in Georgia but also help Americans to get to know Georgia better. Some of those early founders who wanted to make some commercial success, once realized that it was very difficult business to do, and very difficult instrument to make money, they left the

company early. I remained committed to the cause - from the beginning, our idea of bringing Georgian wines was to take this product outside of the traditional ethnic post-Soviet market. At that time, Georgian wines were mostly available in Soviet style, so-called ethnic shops in New York and in some other states. Our objective from the beginning was to take these wines beyond that segment and make mainstream American market know about Georgian products.

This is a very, very difficult task. What you are trying to do is to promote unknown country with unknown grape varietals, with unknown brands to the market which has very little knowledge about even existence of country of Georgia and has spectrum of excellent wines from many other places around the world.

I'm doing wine business as a sort of side activity for the last 20 years. I think, in many ways, we are successful, because this business is now sustainable. It can sustain itself. We brought wines from many different producers, and we can really claim that probably nobody consistently brought that many Georgian producers to the U.S. market as our company did. We helped a lot of small producers to enter the market, get known on the market, and grow their business in Georgia because of sales that occurred in U.S. And this is important for us, I think it had a developmental impact on Georgian destressed rural areas in Imereti, Guria or Racha. So, I think from this perspective this is a small success story. But other than that, it's a difficult business to do. It is very easy to start business, very easy to get licenses and so forth. But to operate and make business successful, and achieve significant sales, it's very hard. In addition to points, I made about difficulties of unknown country and unknown brands and varietals, U.S. is 50 different legislations in terms of operating wine business. Every state is different country, so that also is not helpful. Anyways, a lot of obstacles.

Stephen Jones: And now, of course, there are varietals, as you've noted, that are grown here in the United States, Rkatsiteli and Saperavi, perhaps are the two most popular ones. Do you see a future to produce Georgian varietals here in the United States?

Mamuka Tsereteli: I think, yes. But before going there, one more detail: the US wine market is experiencing decline, and I think probably next couple of years will be even more difficult. In addition to import tariffs, there are different trends emerging in society which are more antagonistic towards consumption or any amount of alcohol. So that creates some issues with the wine business. But we are still optimistic. America is a huge market, and Georgia is too small. If every American who drinks wine buys one bottle of Georgian wine, Georgia will never have enough wine to export to the US.

But overall, U.S. market is very open market and very interested in everything novel, new, - novelty is kind of important element of the U.S. business development. There is a huge openness towards Georgian grape varietals, also Georgian tradition of making wines in *Kvevri*, 8000 years

old traditional method of winemaking, making amber color wine from white grape varietals in clay jars with skin contact. Some people, some producers in U.S., started to experiment with that method, using sometime Georgian imported Georgian *Kvevris*. But also, they use some other vessels as well to do this style of wine. And varietals also have potential. You're right, the Finger Lakes area in NY probably have the largest concentration of Saperavi and Rkatsiteli grapes. But there are those grapes also in some other areas, let's say Virginia, some in California. I think there are other great varietals which may grow better here and become kind of more interesting because of the varietal distinctiveness they have. But that will take time. I always thought that it has to be coordinated effort of a lot of different people and entities and initiatives which should come together in order to really make Georgian wine as one of the established categories in the U.S. market, and having Georgian grape varietals grown in the US is part of that broader picture as well. If you look at which countries are succeeding, you recognize that most of these countries have well known grape varietals for Americans, and that's important.

Stephen Jones: Mamuka, we're coming to the end of the interview, and I'd like to just focus briefly on one of your other distinguished roles, which is as president of the Georgian Association in the USA. I want you to reflect. You were for president from 2006 to 2016, as I recall, and you know, this was a time of great change in terms of relations between the U.S. and Georgia. Georgia became increasingly important in U.S. national security strategy. But also, there was increasing migration from Georgia to the United States. As president of the Georgian Association between 2006 to 2016, can you reflect on how the Diaspora changed while you were president, and tell us a little bit about the activities that you conducted as president.?

Mamuka Tsereteli: That's a very long conversation. First of all, the Diaspora was always reflective of life in Georgia. With the growing numbers of Georgians coming – a newer generation of immigrants, they were maintaining closer ties with Georgia itself. Domestic political opinions in Georgia were strongly reflected in political opinions in U.S. So, confrontations and conflicts between different opinions, were also reflected in perceptions of Georgian-Americans and Diaspora members. So, that was very hard to navigate and avoid, and I think this is an ongoing issue in life of the Diaspora.

But good news at that time was that US-Georgian relations were very important, and very close, and all parties in Georgia and the US agreed with this. Also, every side of the spectrum agreed that restoration of the territorial integrity of Georgia was important, and it was a priority for Georgian communities. Everyone agreed that northern neighbor of Georgia, Russia was an aggressor against Georgia. People may have kept different opinions about how that aggression emerged, or how that aggression impacted some of the domestic political developments in Georgia, but everyone agreed that Russia occupied Georgia, and those Georgian territories needed to be integrated back in Georgia. What I'm saying is that there was a kind of greater uniting cause. So, one of our largest events was in 2009 on Capitol Hill when we had a big event in US Senate related to celebration of

the Georgian Independence Day in May. Georgians and friends of Georgia came from different parts of the US, and Senator McCain and few other members of Congress were there. As I recall, in my tenure as a president, that was the largest event we had, with a united voice for support of Georgia, Georgia's independence, Georgia's sovereignty.

Obviously, political tensions in Georgia are reflective of what is happening in U.S. There are more opportunities today for people to travel back to Georgia, and this connection is much more active now, that 20 years ago. The involvement of the Georgian immigrant community in the life of Georgia is also greater, their participation in life of Georgia, in terms of remittances and investments, is larger.

So, there is a growing power among the immigrant community. But again, there is a lack of unity - you find two Georgians, there will be two different opinions. You find 10 Georgians, and there were 10 different opinions. What I feel is that we are losing the opportunity to stand together to help Georgia because we are so divided. But that's a reflection of life in Georgia as well.

Stephen Jones: Okay, Mamuka, I'm going to wrap up this interview, and I want to thank you very much for this fascinating conversation. We could have gone on much further talking about Diaspora's relationship to the homeland and its influence in the United States and so on. You know, President, former president Zourabishvili, has talked about that relationship quite a bit herself, being an immigrant. I want to thank you again - and thank you for all the work you've done to keep the Diaspora alive and active in the United States.

Mamuka Tsereteli: Thank you Stephen, and we'll keep working together to promote Georgia in the U.S.

Stephen Jones: Mamuka, thank you.