

## EU-Georgia Business Council (EUGBC) Established



Howard Chase (BP Europe) and Arve Thorvik (Statoil) in Brussels at the inaugural meeting of the EUGBC on 25 January

Given the ongoing political and economic reforms in Georgia and its inclusion in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), there are now tangible benefits in promoting EU-Georgia business relations. The closer geographical proximity means that the enlarged Europe and Georgia, its new neighbour, will have an interest in furthering efforts to promote transnational flows of trade and investment. This trade and investment is vital for Georgia's overall development and will result in new economic opportunities for European and Georgian businesses. Therefore, the EU-Georgia Business Council (EUGBC) has been established with the support of the business community, the Georgian Government and BP, who has committed \$300,000 USD.

The EUGBC will work to facilitate investment and trade between Georgia and the EU, as well as promote Georgia in the EU as a place to invest and do business – and vice versa. The EUGBC will also strive to assist members who are engaged in or considering opportunities in

Georgia or the EU, and support them in attaining legitimate business objectives. In addition, the EUGBC will work to promote and protect the common business interests of members and foster ties in the EU and Georgia between businesses, governments and civil societies.

Prior to the inaugural meeting of the EUGBC on January 25, 2006, a working group was formed to assist in the development of the EUGBC. AMCHAM, along with other organizations including GGMW, Nestle, Federation of Georgian Businessmen, Silk Road Group and Georgian Railways, was involved in this working group.

The EUGBC is located in Brussels. This location was decided on given messages delivered in Brussels reach all EU states; Brussels is where the Georgian Government focuses its efforts in the EU; and there are large companies and trade associations present in Brussels. Finally, the EUGBC will co-operate rather than compete with existing business development councils in

Georgia, e.g. AMCHAM, Federation of Georgian Businessmen and Georgian Chamber of Commerce etc.

The EUGBC activities will focus on the EU and Georgia and some of the primary activities will be:

- Establishing relations with key policy makers, appropriate government bodies and civil societies;
- Facilitating discussions between companies, governments and civil societies;
- Bringing together business partners who might otherwise remain unknown;
- Providing information on key political, economic and social issues, that influence investment and trade;
- Creating informational and promotional material about business opportunities;
- Organizing or assist with organizing conferences, receptions exhibitions and trade missions to inform companies about various business issues;

The daily management of the EUGBC will be undertaken by Mr. Konstantin Zaldastanishvili. Mr

Zaldastanishvili has an excellent network of contacts in the EU and Georgian as a result of his previous position as Ambassador of Georgia to the Benelux countries and to the European Communities.

There are 4 membership categories in the EUGBC and they include:

- Core Members;
- Corporate A Members (Georgian Companies);
- Corporate B Members (Non-Georgian Companies);
- Affiliated Members (Individuals and Civil Societies).

The founding core members of the EUGBC are STATOIL, GGMW, Canargo, BP Georgia and BP Europe. Representatives from BP Georgia, GGMW and Statoil have been appointed to the initial Board of Directors.

Membership fees are yet to be finalised by the Board of Directors. However any organisation who is interested in becoming a member of this exciting new business council, should contact Mr. Konstantin Zaldastanishvili: kote.zal@eugbc.net