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Federal Chancellor Schüssel: Georgia is an important energy policy partner

Following his meeting with the Prime Minister of Georgia, Zurab Nogaideli, who is on a working visit to Austria, Federal Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel, the current President of the European Council, informed the press of the main themes of the discussions.

"The Union's energy policy is now entering a decisive and important phase. Given its geostrategic location, Georgia plays an important role for the European Union, particularly as a transit country", Chancellor Schüssel stated. "Diversification holds the key to the future energy policy, whether in transport, production or supply issues. For this reason, the European Union has a strong interest in working together with Georgia on these matters."

Chancellor Schüssel also commented on the current state of EU negotiations with the three countries of the southern Caucasus, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, on the conclusion of action programmes under the European neighbourhood policy. "I hope these action plans can be successfully concluded under the Austrian Presidency", Schüssel said. At the same time, he stressed that further steps towards reform in Georgia were both important and necessary, particularly in the areas of justice, administration and the peaceful settlement of internal conflicts.

Bilateral relations between Austria and Georgia are excellent, according to the Chancellor, but should be intensified in the economic field in particular. A business forum taking place tomorrow in the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber provides a good opportunity for doing so.