



## AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN GEORGIA

16th September 2019

Re: AmCham Georgia's Support for Nonstop US-Georgia Flights

To: Ms. Natia Turnava (Open Letter to the Public)  
Minister of Economy & Sustainable Development of Georgia

Dear Minister Turnava,

The American Chamber of Commerce in Georgia would like to express its profound and sincere support for nonstop flights between the United States and Georgia. We were very encouraged by your visit last week to the US and your meetings with United and Delta Airlines. We are confident that this initiative will create a huge opportunity for the airline that starts operating this route, as well as provide considerable benefits for businesses and people in Georgia.

There is certainly considerable opportunity. As you know, the number of visitors travelling from the US to Georgia increased by 24% to 83 thousand in 2018, from 66 thousand in 2017. Figures released for the first half of 2019 suggest 23% growth this year. Georgia has considerable "buzz". The World Bank ranks Georgia, 6th in the world in its ease of doing business and Forbes said in 2018, 'Berlin Is Out, Tbilisi is In: Georgia's Capital Is This Year's Most Exciting City'.

Not only would nonstop flights make economic sense and garner a considerable market share, we are confident that they would generate growth in both business and tourism travel generally. Given Georgia's strong 'open sky' policy, direct flights could also make Tbilisi a hub for the region, creating opportunities for expansion particularly into Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East.

This would also be hugely advantageous for the Georgian economy, not only stimulating an increase and a diversification of tourists, but would be utilized by the large number of US government officials and increasing number of US business people who visit the region.

In this way, we believe it will strengthen commercial ties between Georgia and America and will help both countries to take advantage of the Free Trade Agreement that we hope will be negotiated in the near future.

We have supported the idea of direct commercial flights for many years, and regularly discuss the possibility with policy-makers and legislators on their visits to Tbilisi and on our regular trips to Washington DC. We feel that the mutual benefits are clear and would create great opportunities for the airline company and for both countries.

We stand ready to discuss this opportunity with any interested airline and to support this initiative in whatever way we can.

Yours faithfully,

R. Michael Cowgill  
President  
American Chamber of Commerce in Georgia