Dear Colleagues,

I find it very difficult to fully express the emotions that your decision - to elect me as the first Georgian Vice President of the International Publishers Association - has given me. Thus, I fully acknowledge this honor and responsibility that each of you has imposed on me from this moment with your support and choice.

I’d like to say a special thank you to Bodour al Qasimi, IPA’s wonderful outgoing president and Jose Borghino and the fantastic team in Geneva for giving me the opportunity to be widely involved in the IPA activities in recent years. And I want to congratulate the new amazing President, Karine Pansa. I’m honored that over the next 2 years I’ll have the chance to work closely with her. I want to say thank you to my colleague Pranav Gupta as well - running for these elections together with him was a real honor.

And thanks to you, dear IPA members, who are doing invaluable work both on national and global levels. It has always been your knowledge, experience, professionalism, and friendliness that gave me the motivation to learn from each of you during the last 7 years of my work at IPA.

Today you, the IPA members, gave me - the representative of one of the smallest but oldest countries in the world - a unique opportunity to make my vice presidency as a living example of the fact that IPA equally appreciates its members regardless of the various capabilities of the countries they represent. I hope that this will become the additional motivation for many of our members from small countries as well to show us the best versions of themselves.

Today's turbulent environment, where mines explode daily in different parts of the world and especially in the region I represent, probably clearly showed us that countries of any capacity, as never before, need consolidation in achieving freedom, peace, and development.

And here let me tell you the story from my personal life. My father was a Soviet dissident. As early as 1962, he was a member of an illegal, underground organization founded in the Georgian city of Zugdidi, which intended to awaken the national spirit through the dissemination of secret proclamations. At that time, he worked at a press and he would secretly take fonts away to help print these illicit proclamations. In 1963, he was arrested and held in the cellar of the KGB building for a long time. They tried to make him speak about his secret activities by torturing him physically and psychologically. The officials couldn’t break him and later they had to let him go. However, this incident has impacted his health condition for the rest of his life. To be honest this episode of my father's life has become the main motivation and responsibility of my life, to fight for a better world.

Our sector has a unique weapon to achieve it - the book. A tool to educate, spread diverse voices, and create a free society. That is why I will dedicate my vice presidency to strengthening IPA’s main pillars: copyright, freedom to Publish, literacy, inclusion, and educational publishing. I will fight for the well-being of our members’ publishers, because books published by them make our world better.