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STATEMENT
by the Executive Body and Secretariat of the EaP CSF Armenian National Platform

Restating the high appreciation of the role ascribed to the civil society in the framework of the European Union's "Eastern Partnership" initiative repeatedly emphasised by the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) and Armenian National Platform (ANP), we at the same time express our deep concern over the lack of opportunity for implementing the activities envisaged by the mission, commitment and the organisational principles of the EaP CSF Armenian National Platform.

In the last EaP Summit Declaration (Brussels, 24/11/2017) the importance of inclusive engagement with civil society within the Eastern Partnership, including through the Civil Society Forum, was reaffirmed.

The 20 EaP Deliverables for 2020 targeted in the Joint Staff Working Document (JSWD) of the European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy include vibrant civil society as a crosscutting deliverable. The consistent EU support to the EaP Civil Society Forum and its National Platforms is underlined in the document.

The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum is a permanent observer and the only civil society structure represented at the EaP intergovernmental meetings of all levels.

The EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) signed on November 24, 2017 provides for the establishment of a bilateral Civil Society Platform as a forum to meet and exchange views, and the EaP CSF National Platform is mentioned there as one of the entities playing a specific role in it.

In order to remain an indispensable partner for the EU and Armenian government, a driver for reforms and promoter of accountability, the ANP, as specified in many documents, needs to strengthen its technical expertise and management capacities.

In the course of the eight years of its existence, the ANP has proven to be an active, inclusive body, where key discussions and effective communication take place, positions on the most topical issues of the country's life are developed and publicised. Even in times of ambiguity in the EU-Armenia relations (2013-2016) the Platform remained attractive for organisations supporting the European choice of Armenia. Nowadays it comprises 250 members, and only the EaP CSF Ukrainian National Platform is more representative among the six EaP CSF NPs.

In spite of the constant lack of resources, the ANP and its members provided their expert input for the democratic reforms agenda in the country, better engagement of the Armenian civil society in the decision-making processes and informing the public of the importance of cooperation between the EU and Armenia. In particular, even before the signing of CEPA the Platform developed a collection of policy papers “Agenda for Dialogue” containing situation analysis, detailed commentaries and recommendations on the implementation of the Eastern Partnership priorities in Armenia in light of CEPA and JSWD on 20 Deliverables for 2020. Consistent work has been carried out for the engagement of partners from the EU member states in the promotion of pro-European reforms in Armenia.

The new challenges facing the ANP are largely incompatible with the complete absence of funding for the Platform since October 2017 with no mechanism of support envisaged until 2019. Similar difficulties have occurred in its activities before, however the ANP has never found itself in a situation, when there were no means even for holding the regular General Assemblies envisaged by its Organisational Principles. This is happening at a decisive time, when the ANP is expected to implement specific activities and have a significant contribution to the EU-Armenia cooperation agenda, which is considered by us as contrary to the interests of bilateral relations.

The freezing of the ANP activities against the background of the overall increased support by the European Union to the NGO sector of Armenia is counterproductive for the consolidation of the ANP members in the implementation of the common mission.

This statement should first and foremost be considered as clarification for the public, the partners and numerous members of the Platform on the reasons for the inactivity of the Executive Body and Secretariat of the ANP. Meanwhile, we reaffirm our readiness to take vigorous steps and come up with new initiatives, hoping that all those whom the solution of the issue depends on realise that this situation is unacceptable.