

8 December 2018

Statement by the Moldovan National Platform to the 10th Annual Assembly of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum

The member organisations of the Moldovan National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) express their concern on the backsliding democracy, worsening environment for civil society, degradation of media freedom, lack of progress in investigation the bank fraud and using the rush procedure to promote doubtful legislation by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova.

The Republic of Moldova is a [captured state](#) by a small group of people with oligarchic interests that concentrated economic and political power, exerting its influence on the Parliament, the Government, political parties, state administration, police, judiciary and the media.

We regret the breach of the political conditions, which relate to democratic standards in Moldova, namely the change of the electoral system despite the negative recommendations of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE-ODIHR) and the Council of Europe's (CoE) Venice Commission, which jeopardises the multi-party system in the Republic of Moldova and concentrates the power in the hands of the two with most means: the Democratic Party of Moldova and the Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova.

The politically controlled judiciary is used as a tool against the public interest. We are alarmed that, after the [invalidation of the mayoral elections in Chisinau](#), now and henceforth any elections can be invalidated by means of ill-motivated court decisions, thus nullifying citizens' choice. We are dismayed by selective justice, disproportionate procedures against representatives of the opposition, lawyers and/or their family members, independent judges, human rights defenders and critics of the Democratic Party of Moldova, as well as the trial of high-profile cases behind closed doors.

We are concerned by the ineffective investigation of the 2014 bank fraud worth USD 1 billion (equal to 12 % of GDP), lack of transparency in the process, lack of adequate progress in recovering the assets, and lack of accountability of decision makers, as well as the limited progress in investigating the "[Russian Laundromat](#)" and in identifying schemes and organisers of money laundering.

We are alarmed by the use of the fast-track procedure in the Parliament, in adopting important legislation, without a proper public debate and consultations – namely the hasty introduction of citizenship through investments in June 2017, which may put at risk Moldova's [financial](#)

[security](#) and that of the European Union; the enactment of the [law on voluntary declaration and fiscal benefits](#) in July 2018, which in essence is a renewed [attempt to amnesty the capital obtained from doubtful sources](#), including the stolen billion; the organisation of the referendum to decrease the number of the members of the Parliament (MPs) at the same time with the parliamentary elections in February 2019, in breach of the Constitutional Court case-law; the increase of the minimum threshold for the organisation of public procurement, that will lead to lack of transparency and inefficiency in using public funds.

We regret that the adoption process of the draft law on non-commercial, or not-for-profit, organisations was suspended – with the existing threat to adopt legislation, limiting foreign funding of civil society organisations (CSOs). We express concern about the growing number of reported cases involving pressure and intimidation against CSOs and media representatives. Moreover, we note with concern that members of local public administration are increasingly being harassed and forced to change political affiliation under duress.

A very recent example of attacks to CSOs constitutes in the [declaration of the Democratic Party of Moldova](#) of 7 December 2018, which states:

“A number of public associations are becoming more and more involved in illegal campaigns of political promotion of potential electoral contestants, and the worst is that they are financed from external sources, which is categorically prohibited by law. We are dealing with a money-backed financing of electoral actions. All these illegal actions are to be documented and transmitted to the competent institutions.”

We suppose it is connected to the international conference “**Joining Efforts against Impunity and Political Corruption**”, organised by **Transparency International–Moldova** on **4 December 2018**, with the participation of **nine political parties (representing the left, centre and right wing)**. It is an example of building political capital on smearing campaigns against CSOs.

We are concerned by the [degradation of media freedom](#); worsened work conditions for journalists, displayed through a reduced level of transparency of public institutions and limited access to some categories of public interest information; an increased number of cases of intimidation and harassment of journalists in connection with their work, but also lack of adequate reaction to such cases from the public institutions.

We call on the Moldovan authorities to ensure that candidates in parliamentary and local elections in 2019 have access to media and are provided with equal treatment to stand in the elections. We urge the Moldovan authorities to ensure an appropriate number of polling stations, both within the country and abroad are set up and call on the international community to apply conditional financing, depending on qualitative results in ensuring democracy in the Republic of Moldova. We call on Moldovan authorities to stop threatening the civil society

organisations that promote democracy, transparency and accountability. We call on European institutions to closely monitor the situation in our country and to establish an international investigation mission to look into the bank fraud and the "Russian Laundromat", including under Article 18 of the Association Agreement (AA) between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova.

Members of the Moldovan National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum