

10 July 2017, Chisinau

**Address by the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum
to the 9th Eastern Partnership Informal Partnership Dialogue**

Dear Commissioner, Deputy Prime Minister, Deputy Secretary General, Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to express my sincere gratitude for providing me with an opportunity to address you on behalf of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF).

I think you would share the opinion that the engagement of the civil society is a key element of the Eastern Partnership, which is at the core of the initiatives like the EaP CSF. At present, the EaP CSF comprises more than 200 CSOs from the EaP and EU countries, while the EaP CSF National Platforms include even more members. The voice of these CSOs represent to a large extent the opinion, expectations and aspirations of the citizens from all the six EaP countries on economic development, free movement, respect of human rights, rule of law, and democratic reform of state institutions of the EaP countries.

Through their participation in the Eastern Partnership initiative, the state authorities of the six EaP countries reaffirmed their engagement to contribute to democratisation and enhanced security for the whole region. Hereby, we urge the governments of the six EaP countries as well as European institutions to avoid the simulation of the process of involvement and consultation with the civil society on the status of EU-oriented reforms and cease any intimidation or persecution of CSOs in the EaP countries.

We welcome the recent endeavours to further develop and refine the EaP as a comprehensive policy. In this regard, we would like to stress that on top of its monitoring and watchdog function, CSOs should be considered as actors responsible for implementation alongside the governments in most of the areas mentioned in Joint Staff Working Document “Eastern Partnership - 20 Deliverables for 2020”, but in particular in the rule of law, anti-corruption and judicial reforms. Currently, the CSOs are included as actors in less than 20 per cent of the milestones and targets.

At the moment, the EaP CSF has at its disposal several important instruments that have proven to be useful for the policy dialogue with the EU and the partner countries. The EaP Index and ad hoc monitoring missions to EaP countries by civil society experts provide an opportunity to assess the situation on the ground, as it has been the case for Armenia in 2016 and Belarus in 2017.

As for the new EaP multilateral architecture, it is crucial that the EaP CSF continues to be an integral part of the multilateral track. We consider it necessary to ensure an active role of the Forum in preparation of the annual programmes, as well as a more meaningful participation in coordination meetings, like this 9th Informal Partnership Dialogue, that would not only be limited to delivering statements but would also include participation in further deliberations.

Your Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The first half of 2017 was rich in positive developments. To name a few, visa-free regimes granted to Georgia and Ukraine, new agreement between the EU and Armenia initiated, on-going negotiations on the new agreement with Azerbaijan. These achievements prove that the reform agenda pays off. However, we should not forget that millions of citizens in the EaP region still do not enjoy the human rights and democratic values on which the Eastern Partnership has been built. The track record of the EaP policy implementation has shown that there are only limited and reversible reform results if the democratic principles and rule of law are not observed.

The civil society is deeply concerned about the political and economic control exercised by the Russian authorities in the region, namely through energy policy instruments, propaganda and destabilization of targeted regions. In this respect, we consider it is vital both for the EU and for EaP countries to boost integration processes, enhance energy security, increase investments in renewable energy and strengthen key institutions. We call on the **EU** to reconsider creating a separate CSDP intergovernmental platform to deal with a wide range of security issues.

At the same time, environmental governance reform should not be side-lined. We strongly urge the **EaP Governments** to prioritize environmental and climate change policies based on EU standards, which guarantee sustainable development of the EaP region. We call on the **EU** to observe closely the dangerous reforms of the environmental institutions in some EaP countries where ministries of environment are being shut down (e.g. Moldova and Belarus).

We call on the **EU** to keep EaP policy high on its agenda accompanied with the relevant financial support. At the same time, the EU should hold the EaP governments fully accountable and apply conditionality if necessary.

We call on **Armenian authorities** to end political persecutions and politically motivated criminal charges against civic activists and people with divergent political views.

We call on **Azerbaijani authorities** to release more than 160 political prisoners who are held in custody or jailed in Azerbaijan, including Ilgar Mammadov, Afgan Mukhtarli, Ali Insanov, Aziz Orujov, and many others.

We call on the **Belarusian authorities** to adhere to their reform commitments and take concrete steps in respecting the fundamental freedoms and rights, and include those into EU-Belarus dialogue agenda. We call on the **Georgian authorities** to investigate thoroughly the appalling case of the abduction of the Azerbaijani journalist Afgan Mukhtarli.

In **Moldova**, the good governance principles were compromised by attempts of the government to impose the change of the electoral system. We call on the **EU institutions** to support active engagement of Moldovan civil society in the monitoring reforms and urge the **Moldovan government** to continue investigations into the major bank fraud case, with perpetrators punished and stolen assets rapidly recovered.

We call on **Ukrainian authorities** to double their efforts in tackling corruption and in reforming judiciary system and public administration. We urge them to stop the pressure on the civic activists engaged in anti-corruption activities in Ukraine. The **EU support** is essential both in terms of reforms process and in terms of fighting Russian aggression and its devastating consequences.

Energy-efficiency in the Eastern Partnership countries

The National Programme on Energy Saving and Renewable Energy of **Armenia** was adopted in 2007. In 2010–2015, international financial institutions (IFIs) provided more than \$87.96 mln energy efficiency lending through local financial institutions. Outreach to local communities is of fundamental importance to the country, as well as the implementation of energy efficiency legislation and its approximation towards the EU standards. An additional challenge in Armenia is the development of renewable energy sources and, particularly, of hydroelectric power, which should be carefully balanced with the environmental concerns over the irreversible impact on the water resources in the country.

The promotion of energy efficiency in **Azerbaijan** is one of the main priorities of the government's energy policy. The country has committed to implement energy efficiency improvement measures aimed at reducing energy costs and emissions, and to increase export capacity and energy savings. As a result of the Soviet times norms and standards that do not correspond to the current energy efficiency standards and targets, the level of energy consumption in buildings is still rather high in the country. Some of the gaps to be overcome include the lack of public information, inadequate legal framework and limited access to capital for consumers, who often face up-front costs for energy efficient systems.

Belarus adopted the Law on Energy Efficiency (1998- 2015), Energy Security Concept (2007-2014), Energy Potential Strategy until 2020 (2010) and National Programme on Energy Savings for 2016- 2020. However, Belarus is still facing significant constraints in fostering energy efficiency due to its limited resources in terms of information and knowledge, statistics, accounting, monitoring, data quality and experts. Other challenges relate to an overall lack of coordination, overlapping responsibilities, insufficient institutional capacity and gaps between regulation and implementation.

Under the Energy Community Accession Protocol, **Georgia** has to implement the Directive 2012/27/EU on Energy Efficiency before the end of 2018. However, there is no energy efficiency legislation or dedicated institution in place so far. The first National Energy Efficiency Action Plan was recently developed and is currently undergoing government approval procedures. Several donors, including the EU, are supporting initiatives in this field; however, there is hardly any serious scale investment in it. There is a need for both the relevant legislation, and the development and establishment of energy efficient technologies and equipment. At the same time, energy producers and consumers should be incentivized more through regulatory measures.

In recent years, the **Moldovan Parliament** transposed the entire energy efficiency and renewable energy sources *acquis communautaire* having adopted a series of legislative acts in the energy field, including the Law on Energy Efficiency, the Law on Energy Performance of Buildings etc. In 2016, Moldovan authorities had already reviewed the Energy Efficiency Programme with a more realistic approach by setting lower targets. However, deficiencies still exist in this field, especially in relation to the residential sector, which does not have a relevant legal and institutional framework that would enable the development and implementation of energy efficient projects on multifamily buildings. In addition, commercial sources are not accessible for energy efficiency projects; therefore, the support by international financial institutions is needed.

In **Ukraine**, a number of laws were recently adopted in this field, such as the Law on Energy Efficiency of Buildings and the Law on Energy Efficiency Fund. The former provides the legal and



structural basis for performing the audit of buildings for further renovations, in order to increase energy efficiency of constructions; the latter sets up a fund that is supported by 120 mln EUR from the EU technical assistance. The problematic aspect is the outreach to communities, as changes are happening at a rather rapid pace at a national level, but these do not reach municipalities fast enough, with the risk of substantially delaying their implementation.

Finally, the EU promotes **cogeneration** – simultaneous production of electricity and heat – in order to improve energy efficiency in Europe. This practice is still not implemented in the EaP region, causing a severe environmental pollution. We therefore urge to promote the necessary legal and technical capacity to implement this process in the EaP countries.

Dear ladies and gentlemen, let me conclude by saying that it is our shared responsibility to make sure that democracy, rule of law and human rights, prosperity and security become the everyday reality in Europe for this and future generations to come. Thank you for your attention. I wish you a successful meeting.

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