

*7 February 2019*

**Statement by Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum on the situation before the Parliamentary elections in Moldova**

The forthcoming Parliamentary elections in the Republic of Moldova on 24 February 2019 must be conducted in a free and fair way. We call on Moldova's judicial and electoral institutions to ensure that the country's citizens will be able to fully exercise their democratic rights. We look to domestic and international observers to give a truthful account of the election campaign and the voting on election day.

We note, with concern, a preliminary report by a group of election observers from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), who stated last month after a visit to Moldova that:

**“The election campaign has just started and political parties and candidates are in general able to campaign freely. Nevertheless, the delegation was informed by different interlocutors about a number of long-standing concerns which still remain unaddressed. In particular, cases of intimidation and violence against candidates; cases of hate speech, including against women candidates; cases of misuse of administrative resources; allegations of vote buying; cases of involvement of public employees in the signature collection procedure; cases of distribution of electoral gifts during election campaign events involving charitable foundations associated with certain political parties.”**

We are also alarmed that the ruling Democratic Party and Şor Party have, in the meanwhile sought, to intimidate the Promo-Lex Association, by publicly questioning its professionalism and impartiality. Promo-Lex, a Moldovan NGO, which is a lead monitor of the electoral process and enjoys our full confidence, has denied these charges.

Last but not least, the Moldovan courts have set a dangerous precedent by invalidating the elections last summer in a final decision, when the election of the Mayor of Chisinau was simply cancelled on spurious grounds.

The Republic of Moldova faces the prospect of being captured by oligarchic clans and having its constitutional institutions brought under their control. There is a high probability that the forthcoming election will mark a major step in this direction.

We urge that the relevant institutions of the European Union react strongly if widespread electoral fraud is reported or if the election is invalidated, as happened in Chisinau last year.



Were this to be the case the EU should consider imposing sanctions against officials responsible for any such decision. The report on the election by observers from PACE as well as the European Parliament and from the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights will be important in this respect.

***Members of the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum***