

Brussels, 4 November 2020

Statement by members of the Steering Committee of the EaP CSF on the continuing of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

The violent conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan has now continued for almost a month. Despite attempts to establish ceasefires, we can unfortunately see how the violence is continuing with no solution in sight. As a platform where civil society in the six Eastern Partnership countries work together, we in the EaP CSF are following developments closely and are alarmed by the fact that innocent civilians are being killed and harmed in this conflict.

In a [statement](#) adopted on 1 October, we condemned the use of military means and violence from both sides, promoted peaceful negotiations, and called for the implementation of confidence-building mechanisms to establish a sustainable and safe solution. We would like to reiterate the appeals from that statement, and, in the context of continuing violence and an increasing number of deaths, to highlight vital steps to restore peace and safety for all involved citizens, inside and outside of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The involvement of third-party actors, notably Turkey, in military activities is severely harming the possibility of resuming negotiations and reaching a peaceful solution. External actors must refrain from involvement in the conflict which favours one party or the other, so that a constructive solution between Armenian and Azerbaijani sides themselves can be reached. Any support for the war by third parties aggravates the humanitarian catastrophe in the region. The EU and EaP states should spare no efforts to stop such cases of support.

The controversial information from the conflict zone, as well as active execution of the information warfare causes additional destabilisation in the region and generates enormous amount of misleading and manipulative content.

The humanitarian losses in this conflict are alarming and continue to increase each day. The only humanitarian organisations present on the ground are the International Red Cross and the Halo Trust, however, due to intensive military activities neither of them can operate within the full scope of their mandate. Since humanitarian needs are increasing and hospitals are already under high pressure due to the COVID-19 pandemic, increased financial support to humanitarian organisations is vital in order to limit the number of deaths and harmed civilians.

Many international actors, including the EU, UN, and OSCE, have stated that war is not a way of resolving the conflict. In a similar vein, we should be mindful of the centrality of human rights and the values on which the Eastern Partnership is based and support those civil society groups that are promoting peace and reconciliation of the conflict.

This war not only affects the stability of the South Caucasus region, but also threatens the entire architecture of the EaP values, policies and strategies that have been built with such a

vigour over so many years. Therefore, the Steering Committee calls on the EU, OSCE, and the international community to:

- Make every possible effort to ensure the respect of cease-fire agreements
- Demand the disengagement of external actors and third parties from unilateral actions unless they contribute to peaceful negotiations;
- Ensure the demilitarisation of the region by initiating discussions with external actors to stop them from contributing and selling particularly offensive military equipment to any of the two parties to the conflict;
- Apply air space restrictions above the conflict area in order to better control the military actions on both sides and prevent harm to civil aviation in the conflict zone;
- Call on the conflicting parties to re-establish dialogue, initiate peaceful negotiations and end the violence on the line of contact;
- Support the establishment of verification mechanisms for information and media in order to identify and combat disinformation on both sides of the conflict;
- Increase humanitarian support to the International Red Cross and support other international humanitarian organisations' deployment to the conflict area.

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

Ina Coseru, National Environmental Center, Moldova

Maksym Koriavets, Polissya Foundation for International and Regional Studies, Ukraine

Mikalai Kvantaliani, Association "New Group", Belarus

Adrian Lupusor, Expert-Grup, Moldova

Tatiana Marian, National Trade Union Confederation of Moldova

Sofia Strive, ForumCiv, Sweden

Yurii Vdovenko, Center for Cross-Border Cooperation, Ukraine