

Brussels, 12 October 2020

Statement from the co-chairs of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum to the Azerbaijan National Platform

All members of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum are deeply concerned and worried about the escalation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and are following the development closely. We are especially worried for the safety and security of the local population since high numbers of innocent civilians, both from Armenian and Azerbaijani sides, have lost their lives. What unites all members and delegates in the Civil Society Forum is that we always speak up to protect and ensure that civil society in the Eastern Partnership is respected and safe. In this context, when two countries in the region are at war against each other, it is more important than ever that we remember that we as a Forum always are at the civil society's side and promote peace and stability instead of conflict and violence.

On the 1st of October, the Steering Committee of the EaP CSF adopted [a statement](#) on the escalation of conflict in Nagorno Karabakh. This statement was democratically voted for in the Steering Committee and approved by all national platform coordinators, including Armenia and Azerbaijan. The statement clearly marks the stand of the Forum in this conflict and underlines that the EaP CSF condemns the use of military means and violence from both sides, promotes peaceful negotiations and implementation of confidence-building mechanisms to establish a solution that is safe and sustainable in the long-term perspective.

The joint statement is a bright illustration that despite the sensitive situation for civil society on both sides of the conflict, the EaP CSF is able to develop a joint appeal for peace. As we have found out, on the 7th of October the Azerbaijani National Platform published a statement on the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh which goes against the peaceful approach of the joint statement. We are concerned about the Azerbaijan statement and would like to reconfirm that the opinion of the EaP CSF is that there can only be a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh, thus the EaP CSF welcomes the ceasefire agreement reached in Moscow and hope that the violence will end and create sustainable conditions for peaceful negotiations.

We understand that there are strong personal, emotional, political and historical aspects involved in this conflict and that it is difficult to not let it influence people's perspectives and viewpoints. However, we, the co-chairs of the EaP CSF, would like to remind you that the EaP CSF stands united for civil society and does not take side in this conflict. We would therefore strongly call on you to remove from public sources the statement issued on the 7th of October since we believe that it might stir up internal conflicts among the members of the Forum and does not present a constructive way of approaching a peaceful and sustainable solution to the ongoing conflict. We would also like to suggest for the future to refrain from issuing statements that may be divisive and might stir up conflict among the members of the Forum.

Yours sincerely,

Sofia Strive and Ina Coseru
Co-chairs of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum