



# EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

## **PUBLIC ADDRESS OF THE BELARUSIAN NATIONAL PLATFORM OF THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM TO THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP SUMMIT**

*September 28, 2011*

The Eastern Partnership initiative was proposed by the European Union with the aim of supporting reforms in six countries of the Eastern dimension and strengthening their relations with the EU on the basis of common values — with democratic development and the rule of law being at the core of those. Along with the promotion of economic and social reforms in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, the EU remains committed to the further advancement of democratic norms and values in the six partner states.

The second Eastern Partnership Summit that will take place on 29-30 September 2011 in Warsaw is an opportunity to review at the highest level the progress of its implementation and to discuss priorities for the future. The final Declaration of the Summit will reflect the current level of interaction, offering an outlook for the development of relations in the future.

The Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership remains concerned with the human rights situation in Belarus, one of the Eastern Partnership states. We welcome the efforts of the European Union to raise these concerns at the Warsaw Summit and the firm position of the EU on the immediate release and rehabilitation of all political prisoners as a condition for political dialogue with Belarus. *Existence of political prisoners and torture experienced by some of them while in jail, persecution for civil and political activities, serious shortages on the freedom of assembly, freedom of association and the freedom of media need to be addressed.*

We regret to learn that the draft of the Summit Declaration does not include support for the EU approach by the remaining five EaP countries. **We call on the Heads of States and Governments of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine to synergize their position towards Belarus with that of the EU.** Countries of the Eastern Partnerships, along with the 27 Member States of the Union, in our view, could send a strong signal to the Belarusian authorities calling for the *immediate release and rehabilitation of political prisoners and the beginning of a dialogue with political opposition and civil society in the country.*