

Speech at the Opening of the 7th Annual Assembly of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum

*20 November 2015
Kyiv, Ukraine*

Dear distinguished guests, dear Prime Minister, Commissioner, members of the Steering Committee, dear participants of the seventh Annual meeting of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum.

It is a privilege to me, as a chairperson of the Ukrainian Organisational Committee to welcome everybody to this long awaited event. This is the first time when Kyiv and Ukraine host the Annual Assembly of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, and let me express the hope on behalf of all Ukrainian delegation and the team that this event will meet your highest expectations.

Let me welcome you for your joining us at this turbulent time in Ukraine, which is unfortunately not the quietest place in the world now, but still the place where the genuine partnership and sincere friendship is highly welcomed. They are even more welcomed then ever.

Two years ago, at the Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit we have protested against the failure of Ukrainian leadership to put a signature under Association Agreement, and it was a start of the Euromaidan which changed Ukraine and changed the whole Europe. Now we have in a different world, where the old logic is not operational anymore.

From current perspective our old perceptions look naive and innocent. It has been proven, that the objective which we are eager to reach costs much more then we thought. We have demonstrated the readiness to pay the price for the European choice and now we are moving ahead, with no illusions and no fear.

We are currently finding ourselves at the point of history when the commitment to the European values is being checked by the ever-growing challenges, and the whole Europe faces the moment of truth. It is exactly the time when we have to stand together to respond on the existential issues of the European destiny.

And despite all the difficulties Ukraine is going through, the real amazement and admiration goes to ordinary people of Ukraine, whose work is full of sacrifice, who provide their help and the most important hand to internally displaced persons, forced to fled their homes and for whom this awful war become as a routine.

Thank you to those ordinary Ukrainians who take care of wounded soldiers, their families, children's in grief for their fathers, who remain to be human and kind despite the war and all the economic troublesome in the country.

And I believe those people are modern day examples of true heroes transforming and making our country more democratic and free.



Dear guests, in memory of people who lost their lives during the Revolution of Dignity and in the light of what happened in Paris last Friday, I would like to announce a minute of silence to pay tribute to innocent victims of this and other horrible attacks against the humanity, which happened all over the World.

We stand shoulder to shoulder with all the people and families of those who lost their loved as we do know well the meaning of terror and its result.

Please, a minute of silence.....

Dear Commissioner, few months ago in Riga, civil society activists, members of the Forum from their countries submitted to you symbolic applications for the EU membership which we hope some day will make real. I am not authorized now to do any follow up on that, just thank you for accepting our invitation to come, and let me invite you for the welcoming remarks....

Dear Prime Minister, it is a pleasure to see you among our guests. Now Ukraine is a country which is seen in Europe at the same time with the hope and with the concerns. What would you say to the hundreds of the civil society leaders from the whole Europe gathered in this room to put concerns down and to encourage the hopes? Prime Minister Arseny Yatseniuk, the floor is yours.

Iryna Sushko,
Chairperson of the Ukrainian Organisational Committee