

## **Speech for the opening of the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Assembly of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum**

*20 November 2015  
Kyiv, Ukraine*

Dear Prime Minister Yatsenyuk,

Dear Commissioner Hahn,

Dear guests,

Dear colleagues,

It is a great honor to welcome you on behalf of the Steering Committee of the EaP CSF and a great opportunity to talk about perceptions and expectations that we have on Eastern Partnership.

Changing environment is the best opportunity of rethinking the role of the civil society and reevaluating the added value of the CS actors in the new context and in this respect we at the Civil Society Forum are in constant reflection.

There are two Eastern Partnerships: EaP for governments and EaP for societies and the closer these two are to each other, the more synchronized they are, the better it is.

Harmonization of the EaPs is one of the major tasks of the civil society in general and CSF in particular. To do so it needs to deliver expectations of the societies to the decision makers and make sure they are not only heard, but also taken into account. Civil Society also needs to collect information and explanation of what is being done by the states to the societies.

In this respect we are very happy for an extremely important precedent that took place in Georgia recently. The Memorandum of Cooperation signed between Georgian Government and the CSF National Platform makes involvement of the civil society in implementation of the Association Agreement more institutional and substantial.

We perceive the EaP as a project that has an interesting potential for regionalization and another important task of the Forum in this respect is to discuss possibilities of forming regional identity and regional agenda. This is the basis of the multilateral dimension of the EaP in general and EaP CSF in particular.

In order to make this happen there is a strong need for:

- More active and diversified participation of the Forum in the CS-National Authorities-EU format on bilateral level, and
- Initiatives, activities and projects between NPs and via WGs in all possible national and thematic configurations

To be more specific I would like to mention some key points for each country:

1. Georgia

Ensuring smooth Visa Liberalization process and giving Georgia clear European perspective

2. Moldova

Creation of a special group working on anti-corruption within the framework of the Association Agreement National Plan

3. Ukraine

Ensuring qualitative implementation of the Association Agreement leading to modernization of Ukraine, effective implementation of visa liberalization process

4. Armenia

Making the Scoping exercise and the unsigned Association Agreement public will contribute more substantial involvement of the CS on one hand and will legitimize EU's dialogue with the Armenian Authorities among the wider public on another.

5. Belarus

Using the EaP and recent warming between Belarus and the EU as a chance for internal dialogue between the civil society and the Authorities

6. Azerbaijan

The situation is still uncertain, there is a lack of understanding between the parliaments, and the civil society hopes that these issues will be solved because the effective dialogue is of mutual benefit.

At the Forum we all are united with our dream to see the Eastern Partnership as a peaceful, sustainable and developing area, and we are ready to contribute to this goal.

Thank you for attention.

Mikayel Hovhannisyan,

EaP CSF Steering Committee