



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

Civil Society Forum

Brussels, April 19 2013

Elkhan Suleymanov

Chairman of the Azerbaijani Delegation to the Euronest PA

President of the Association for Civil Society Development in Azerbaijan (ACDSA)

Dear Mr Suleymanov,

Thank you very much for your letter dated the 15th of April 2013 which I read with interest. I am afraid, however, that you may not be in full possession of the facts about our recent Steering Committee meeting in Yerevan to which you refer in your letter.

Namely, we discussed the problem of bona fide non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which are based in conflict areas such as Nagorno Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria. These are unable to attend the annual meeting of the Civil Society Forum because of the lack of international recognition of their place of professional activity.

We provisionally agreed that a small number of NGOs from such places would be selected on the basis of their applications to attend our next annual meeting in Chisinau in order to show that we recognize them as NGOs and want them to have the same opportunities which other NGOs have in the Eastern Partnership countries.

The designation 'EaP region', or, in other words, the 'EaP area' and not "Eastern Partners regions" as you say in your letter is merely a geographical term which shows that they are from the same area as their fellow NGOs from the EaP countries and should not be discriminated against because of their geographical location. All the EaP member countries are from the 'EaP region or area' which includes Minsk as well as Kiev, Baku and Chisinau. And the EaP region or area also includes Tiraspol, Stepanakert or Tskhinvali.

Please be assured that it never crossed our minds when we suggested, for example, that an NGO from Tiraspol could come to the Forum in Chisinau from that this would "cast doubt on international and legal standards and the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova as well as contradict the legal basis of relations with the EU". Nor was there any thought in our minds that we were acting to secretly justify "the occupation or separation of the territories of the EaP countries".

Please note that the Steering Committee has no problem with dropping the 'EaP region' designation and replacing it with 'from the EaP area'. We have a precedent for this as representatives from the European Union sit in the Steering Committee not as representatives of the countries in which their NGOs are registered but from the area of the EU.

However I repeat that the term EaP region is not a political one. Neither is it a legal term, nor is it a diplomatic term or any term other than a geographical term. Nor are we in any way attempting to "sabotage" the Eastern Partnership or to act in contradiction of "European values" as you say.

Our deliberations in Yerevan on this issue are currently being consulted with our national platforms and already we know that our colleagues from the National Platform in Baku have insisted that any NGOs from Nagorno Karabakh



which apply for participation in the CSF annual meeting could be selected only as members of the Azerbaijani national delegation. The Steering committee respects this decision and will abide by it.

Yours sincerely
Krzysztof Bobinski
Co chair, Steering Committee, Civil Society Forum