

Statement of the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum on the situation in Ukraine ahead of Vilnius Summit

25 November 2013

The Steering Committee of the Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership supports the ongoing demonstrations in Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities in favour of the signing by the country of the Association Agreement which has been under negotiation for many years and is already initiated.

We call on all sides to start a dialogue between the authorities and the demonstrators to map out a policy which would firmly put Ukraine back on its European path and enable the speedy signing of the Association Agreement (AA).

We absolutely reject the explanation that President Viktor Yanukovich recently decided to suspend efforts to sign the agreement because the AA would have been harmful to Ukraine and its people. If this were the case, then why would the Ukrainian government have spent so much time and effort to negotiate and then initial the agreement?

We condemn Russia's use of economic pressure to persuade Ukraine and other countries, such as Moldova, to reject the AA. This is blatant interference in the internal affairs of another country, and runs counter to the principles Russia accepted when it joined the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the Council of Europe. We appeal to Russian civil society to demand of its government that it respect these principles.

We reject the view that Ukraine is being blackmailed by the European Union on the issue of the AA, and that the current demonstrations in Kyiv and elsewhere are being organised by the EU.

We call on the EU institutions and member states to keep the door open to the signing of the Association Agreement and to do their utmost to facilitate the process even at this late date. We welcome the latest statement on the situation of Ukraine by Herman van Rompuy, the President of the European Council, and Jose Manuel Barroso, the President of the European Commission, that "the EU stands ready to be more open and more supportive to those who are willing to engage in reforms and modernisation".

The EU, including the European Parliament, should also openly recognise the support the demonstrators are showing for the cause of European integration and firmly warn the Ukrainian authorities not to use force against its own citizens.