



Baku, 16 October 2013

**The statement by the Azerbaijan National Platform of Eastern Partnership Civil
Society Forum
on Azerbaijan 9 October Presidential Elections 2013**

The National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum of Azerbaijan notes with great regret that voting and counting in the presidential elections of 9 October 2013 were conducted with serious violations, as reported in the results of observation by OSCE/ODIHR, local observation organisations, and monitoring of the elections by the members of the National Platform. Moreover, during the pre-election period and on election day, the fundamental rights of citizens were violated, in particular the persecution and arrests of civil society and opposition activists. The entire election process was impeded by the unauthorised interference of police and local in the nomination and registration of candidates, the pre-election campaign, voting and vote-counting.

The National Platform notes that the authorities did not create the necessary conditions for the conduct of free and fair democratic elections, did not release political prisoners, and did not demonstrate the political will to provide for freedom of expression, assembly and association, for which it would have been necessary to amend the Election Code, the Law on Freedom of Assembly, the Law on NGOs (social associations and foundations), and the Law on Political Parties in line with the recommendations of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe.

During the election year, the environment for non-governmental organisations, political parties and social movements was significantly restricted. Amendments to the Law on NGOs (social associations and foundations), on Grants, Administrative Code of Conduct, adopted on 11 March 2013, significantly restricted the possibilities for financing of unregistered NGOs. The opportunities for NGOs and political parties to conduct events in the regions were also restricted, and numerous cases of interference by the administrative organs were registered in the allocation of venues for NGO events in Baku.

The National Platform notes that during the campaign period the government of Azerbaijan did not provide favourable conditions for political activities and political debate, and thus did not create conditions that would have enabled voters' active participation in the election process, such as communication of the presidential candidates with the electorate. Owing to the government's total control of television stations, the access of candidates to the mass media was also denied.

On the election day, the video, photo and audio materials provided by local and foreign observers, as well as by journalists and citizens of the country, proved that the voting and counting were conducted with serious violations. These violations, which were observed in the majority of polling



stations, consisted of carousel voting, bringing voters in groups to the polling stations, ballot stuffing, and participation of citizens not on the voter lists.

The National Platform regrets that legal investigations are not being carried out into the people responsible for the violations, and notes that instead political pressure has continued after the elections.

The Azerbaijan National Platform, while calling on the government of Azerbaijan to express tolerance to political opposition and alternative views, considers it extremely important in the course of EU integration to demonstrate respect for political pluralism, the rule of law, and the right of citizens to political participation. In this context, the further participation of Azerbaijan in the Eastern Partnership programme in the post-election period should take into account respect for human rights and democratic institutions, guarantee political freedoms, and introduce improvements into election legislation and practice.