



**Catherine Ashton,
Vice-President, European Commission,
and High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, European Council**

**Štefan Füle
European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy**

Presidency of the Council of the European Union

**Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Eastern Partnership countries
Ministers of Foreign Affairs, EU member states
COEST delegates of the EU member state**

Brussels, 7 February 2014

Dear High Representative, Dear Commissioner, Dear Ministers, Dear Delegates,

In advance of the EU Council meeting on 10 February, we share with the Council our support for strengthening the integration of the Eastern Partner countries with the EU, and for furthering democracy, human rights, and fundamental freedoms in the EU's neighbourhood.

Bearing in mind that implementation of the agreements under the Eastern Partnership initiative requires political commitment and effective policy implementation on the side of Partner governments, we call upon the Council to commission a strategic review of the implementation of the EU's policies towards the Eastern Partner countries, in particular:

- effective use of EU financial support to governments and other actors in the Eastern Partnership countries, including budget support to governments,
- consistency in observation and promotion of human rights, including working for the release of political prisoners and applying pressure for free and fair elections,
- greater engagement with civil society, expert groups, and watchdog groups monitoring human rights and policy effectiveness
- the effectiveness and potential of the multilateral dimension in the Eastern Partnership initiative.

The Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership is ready to take up an active role in such a review, including providing its expertise, analysis, and monitoring, e.g. of the use of EU funding, and of the observation of human rights.

We express our solidarity with the Ukrainian people who have proved their commitment to European choice, democracy and civic freedom during an almost three-month long protest and resistance movement launched in November 2013.

Being deeply concerned by the recent developments, we call upon the EU Council to urge Ukraine's authorities:

- To prevent violence and take necessary steps to find a sustainable and peaceful solution to the ongoing

crisis, including the introduction of constitutional reforms to ensure more checks and balances to limit presidential power, and the creation of a government of national reconciliation

--To release arrested protesters (de-facto hostages)

--To investigate and punish those officials and policemen guilty of violence

Recognising the essential role of the EU's leverage to foster democratic developments in Eastern Europe, we call upon the EU Council:

--To offer a full-fledged European perspective for Ukraine and other EaP countries willing to become a part of the European family on the basis of Article 49 and relevant criteria.

--To establish a dedicated, long-term high-level mediation mission to Ukraine until the crisis is peacefully resolved and political reconciliation is achieved.

--To provide adequate financial and technical support to Ukraine once political conciliation is achieved, having in mind future signing and implementation of Association Agreement initialled in 2012.

--To make a priority the lifting of short-term visa requirements for the citizens of EaP countries as soon as possible upon completion of the visa dialogue processes and visa facilitation and readmission agreements with the respective countries.

Yours faithfully,

Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum