



To: **Baroness Catherine Ashton,**

High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission

Cc: **Štefan Füle,**

European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy

Cc: **Foreign Affairs Ministers of Eastern Partnership Ministerial 2013**

22.07.2013

**An Appeal from the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum
Georgian National Platform**

With this letter, we would like to request that you step up efforts in Georgia and in the region to oppose the Russian Federation's policy of establishing new insurmountable "borders" and erecting various forms of barricades, barbed wire fences, reinforced concrete structures, walls, and trenches on the territory of Georgia.

Since the 2008 Russia-Georgia war, Russian military forces have been deployed on Georgian territory in gross violation of international law and the sovereign rights of a nation, and as a result, the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia and the former South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast remain occupied. Ethnic cleansing took place on these territories, and this has been confirmed by many international organisations. The Russian military is deliberately making rules for crossing the administrative boundary more difficult and is constructing insurmountable barriers in such a way that they are dividing families and private and communal properties, and impeding freedom of movement. This process is continuing and it has only intensified during the past few months. Beyond the barbed wire fences lie arable land, sacred places and cemeteries, infrastructure for water, both drinking and irrigation, and more. Cases of repression experienced by the local population for "violating the border" are of great concern. Quite often, children and the elderly are among the victims of this repression. Civil society monitors have reported many such cases.

The EU Monitoring Mission is well aware of these aforementioned facts. We are grateful to the EU, European Neighbourhood Policy and Eastern Partnership Initiative, whose goal is to support the development of our country. We support the EU's non-recognition and engagement policy towards the conflict regions. This policy means that the benefits of Georgia's integration and cooperation with the EU will become available to those living in the conflict zones. However, the Russian Federation's policy in the region hinders the engagement policy, and in so doing, harms both sides divided by the conflict. The

construction of a new insurmountable “border” and the establishment of “border crossing rules” disrupt family ties and hinder public dialogue, trade, and participation in healthcare and educational programmes for the sides divided by the conflict. This policy instills a feeling of constant danger and illegal persecution within society and as a result, threatens stability in the region. This process violates fundamental human rights and makes an already unbearable situation for the local population even more difficult from both a security and humanitarian point of view. This is not even to mention that Russia is failing to fulfill its international obligations and is in violation of the August 2008 EU-brokered ceasefire agreement and various principles of international law, among other things. We hope that the EU has tangible levers in order to resist the Russian Federation’s deceptive policy.

On behalf of the Georgian National Platform, we would like to thank you for your support and efforts to bring peace and prosperity to Georgia.

The Signatory organisations:

1. Association “Green Alternative”
2. Georgia Press Association
3. Georgian Association of Regional Broadcasters
4. International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy
5. Women's Initiatives Supporting Group
6. "Article 42 of the Constitution"
7. Georgian Trade Unions Confederation
8. LDA Georgia
9. Caucasus Environmental NGO Network
10. Energy Efficiency Foundation
11. Peaceful and Business Caucasus
12. Foundation ”Multi- Ethnic Resource Centre on Civic Education Development”
13. IDP Association "Consent"
14. "School-Family-Society" Association
15. International Center for Advancement of Research, Technology & Innovation
16. Association for the Farmers' Rights Defence
17. Student Youth Council
18. European Integration Forum
19. European Initiative - Liberal Academy Tbilisi
20. Fund of Women Entrepreneurs
21. Transparency International Georgia
22. World Experience for Georgia
23. Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies
24. International Centre for Geopolitical Studies
25. Cultural-Humanitarian Fund "Sukhumi”

26. Civil Development Association
27. International Fund of Sustainable Development
28. Human Rights Centre
29. Public Advocacy
30. Association "Atinati"
31. "Caucasian Mosaic"
32. The Greens Movement of Georgia
33. Penal Reform International
34. Energy Efficiency Centre Georgia
35. Foundation "Caucasus Environment"
36. Caucasian University Women
37. Union "Ecotech"
38. International Business and Economic Development Centre
39. Association European Studies for the Innovative Development of Georgia
40. Coalition for Independent Living
41. Open Society Georgia Foundation
42. Institute for the study of nationalism and conflict
43. Healthy World
44. Association for the efficient use of the Georgian energy resources
45. International Organization of Human Rights protection and Prisoners social welfare
46. Repatriates' Union
47. Tbilisi Centre for Policy Analysis
48. Caucasian House Georgia
49. Union of Teachers "Education and Universe"
50. Caucasian Institute for Economic and Social Research
51. Genius Loci
52. "Youth Alternative"
53. Association "Woman and Business"
54. Youth for Justice - Georgia
55. Levan Mikeladze Foundation
56. United Public Movement "Multinational Georgia"
57. Centre for the Research of Religions
58. Association "Green Wave"