

ARMENIAN NATIONAL PLATFORM OF EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM

STATEMENT

We, the members of the Armenian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) - non-governmental organizations, united around the goal of increasing the activism of civil society in the framework of the EU-Armenia cooperation agenda, through provision of independent assessment of the Eastern Partnership progress, ensuring awareness and consolidation of our compatriots in the advancement of democratic values and reforms,

- note with satisfaction that there is an opportunity for deepening EU-Armenia relations and entering a qualitatively new stage. The anticipated initialing of the Association Agreement (AA) is not merely a set of additional international commitments, but presumes an implementation of effective strategy directed towards promoting good governance, economic development, strengthening of democratic institutions, ensuring the rule of law, social protection of citizens and environmental security,
- at the same time, we express our concern over direction of the ongoing debates in Armenian society around the EU-Armenia negotiation process, which are sometimes superficial, express distorted views about priorities and put an undue emphasis on foreign policy contradictions related to the AA. Such abstract formulas as “either EU or Russia”, “both EU and Russia” that circulate in the public discourse divert the public’s attention from the essence of the process and restrict the adequate understanding of it,
- we consider the AA not as choice in favor or against this or that state or a union of states, but as a step serving common interests of the Armenian state and society. The signing of this document means endorsement of a large-scale reform programme by the Republic of Armenia (RA) Government, provision of effective assistance for its implementation by the EU and adoption of a clear orientation by Armenia towards European integration. The reforms envisaged in the AA will raise the value of Armenia as a partner for all those countries, which are interested to establish mutually beneficial relations with it.

At the same time, we

- acknowledge that limited information about the AA and the absence of a strategy for ensuring public awareness about it leads to distorted perceptions about European integration, whilst also allowing manipulation of the public opinion,

- stress that the justified doubts that the justified doubts towards the official results of the 2012-2013 elections, the lack of effective policy for the fight against corruption, the atmosphere of impunity, and outright protectionism being offered for political loyalty run counter the spirit and the letter of negotiations between Armenia and the European Union, as well as the documents to be signed, thus causing lack of public confidence towards the possibility of genuine reforms in the framework of EU-RA cooperation.

Given the above, the ANP

- favours the successful finalization of the EU-Armenia negotiations around the Association Agreement, their initialing during the EaP Summit in Vilnius, as well as the alignment of the bilateral cooperation framework with the country's priorities and the democratic aspirations of the citizens,
- calls on the RA authorities to engage in an open dialogue with citizens, raise their public awareness of the negotiations' context, pursue policies in line with the proclaimed values, abandon the practice of imitating the fullfilment of international commitments, which was, to a certain extent, observed in the process of implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plan,
- calls on the EU institutions to adhere to European values and to the "more for more" principle and follow them unconditionally: this does not merely presume obtaining assurances from the RA Government about being consistent in the reform process, but it also means advancing own initiatives to overcome numerous challenges that separate the country from the EU standards,
- calls on the Armenian political forces and media outlets to refrain from using the theme of the AA for their narrow, mercantile purposes and to take part in the constructive and meaningful discussions around the EU-Armenia relations.

Aware of its responsibility, the Armenian National Platform of the EaP Civil Society Forum expresses its readiness to engage in dialogue and cooperation with all stakeholders and the general public towards enhancing effective participation of Armenia in the EaP and AA processes, whilst excluding any kind of political, party or group biases. Consolidation of the country's reformist, creative circles is the main guarantee of the success.

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