

**Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Georgian National Platform**

*Open Letter*

Open letter by Georgian Civil Society Organisations to the EU Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Mr. Štefan Füle.

In recent years, Mr Thomas Hammarberg has made an outstanding impact in his capacity as EU Special Advisor on Legal and Constitutional Reform and Human Rights in Georgia. Mr Hammarberg played an important role in reducing the dangerous tension between Georgia's main political forces after the October 2012 parliamentary elections, which saw the first democratic electoral transfer of power in the country's modern history. Mr Hammarberg has been a vigilant observer, reacting promptly to every major problem in the field of human rights and urging Georgia's new authorities to stay loyal to the principles of democracy and rule of law. He has, among other things, provided invaluable assistance to Georgia's civil society organisations.

After the upcoming local government elections, Georgia will enter a new phase of transition when the gains made in recent years in terms of the development of a multi-party democratic system will have to be consolidated if the country is to move closer to Europe. Georgia will undoubtedly face a number of serious challenges in this process and significant efforts will have to be made to strengthen the rule of law and ensure protection of human rights. Georgian Government still faces numerous challenges related to the constitutional reform, operations of the law enforcement bodies, reformation of the judiciary. Special attention should be paid to the protection of minority rights.

It recently became known to the civil society organisations that soon after the EU-Georgia Association Agreement is signed, Mr. Hammarberg will no longer be advising the Georgian Government. In this situation it will be mutually beneficial for Georgia for the EU as well as the for the Georgian Government if Mr. Hammarberg stays on as the EU Special Advisor on Legal and Constitutional Reform and Human Rights in Georgia. It is only natural that there will be space for recommendations related to the areas mentioned above. At the same time, the EU will need to have up-to-date information about how Georgia follows and implements the commitments undertaken by the EU-Georgia Association Agreement and will need to assess the country's progress on the way of building its democratic institutions. Moreover, the civil society in Georgia will greatly benefit from having an ally like Mr Hammarberg on this difficult road.

The undersigning civil society organisations would like to urge the European Commission and Commissioner Füle to prolong Mr. Hammarberg's mission by extending the EU grant to the Office of the Public Defender's Office through which the performance of his mandate has been possible. This will be one of the most important steps undertaken by the EU in assisting Georgia's democratic transformation and harmonisation into the European space.

**The signatory organizations (the members of Georgian National Platform):**

1. Association "Atinati"
2. Association "Green Alternative"
3. Association DEA for Disabled Women and Mothers of Disabled Children
4. Association "MERKURI"
5. Association of Young Professionals in Energy of Georgia
6. Association for the efficient use of the Georgian energy resources
7. Caucasus Environmental NGO network (CENN)
8. Civic Development Institute
9. Coalition Homecare Georgia
10. Cultural-Humanitarian Fund "Sukhumi"
11. Energy Efficiency Foundation
12. European Initiative - Liberal Academy Tbilisi
13. Foundation "Multi- Ethnic Resource Centre on Civic Education Development"
14. Georgian Association "Woman in Business"
15. Georgian Association of Regional Broadcasters
16. Georgian Trade Union Confederation
17. Georgian Young Lawyers' Association
18. Gori Information Center
19. Healthy World
20. Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Georgian National Committee
21. Human Rights Centre
22. Human Rights Priority
23. IDP Association "Consent"
24. Institute for the study of nationalism and conflict
25. International Center for Advancement of Research, Technology & Innovation (ICARTI)
26. International Center of Geopolitical research
27. International Center on Conflict and Negotiation
28. International Society "Caucasian Mosaic"
29. International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy
30. Junior achievement of Georgia
31. Open Society Georgia Foundation
32. Partnership For Road Safety
33. Peaceful and Business Caucasus
34. Public Advocacy
35. Repatriates' Union
36. Save The Future Generation
37. Student Youth Council
38. Studio "Re"

39. Teachers' Union "Education and Universe"
40. The Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development
41. The Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia
42. Transparency International Georgia
43. Union "Article 42 of the Constitution"
44. United Public Movement "Multinational Georgia"
45. "Women Enterprise" Fund Georgia
46. Young socialists of Georgia
47. Youth Alternative
48. Youth Association "Droni"
49. Youth for Justice – Georgia
50. Association of Tea Producers Georgia “Georgian Tea”
51. International Foundation "LEA"
52. Samtskhe-Javakheti Regional Association "Toleranti"
53. Institute of Democracy
54. Human Rights House Tbilisi
55. Community Foundation GENIUS LOCI
56. Save The Future Generation
57. Foundation for Media Development
58. Foundation “Caucasus Environment”
59. Women's Initiatives supporting Group
60. Caucasian House Georgia
61. Center of Development and Democracy
62. International Center for Civic Culture
63. Women’s Information Centre
64. Energy Efficiency Centre Georgia
65. Youth Initiative for Democracy
66. Psycho-Rehabilitation Centre for Victims of Torture, Violence and Pronounced Stress Impact –  
EMPATHY