



EU-ARMENIA CIVIL SOCIETY PLATFORM

3rd meeting
12 September 2023

JOINT STATEMENT

The EU-Armenia Civil Society Platform (CSP) is one of the bodies set up within the framework of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between the European Union and Armenia. It enables civil society organizations from both sides to monitor the implementation process, and prepare its recommendations to the relevant authorities.

The third meeting of the CSP was held on 12 September 2023 in Brussels, Belgium.

On the implementation of the EU-Armenia CEPA, the members of the CSP:

1. remind that the primary functions of the EU-Armenia Civil Society Platform in the area of CEPA implementation are contribution to the process with advisory sectoral expertise, ensuring that the reforms envisioned under CEPA are implemented in a transparent and accountable manner through concerted and coordinated monitoring effort, and raising public awareness about the activities implemented within the framework of the CEPA and the EU-Armenia cooperation in general;
2. indicate that the Platform has undertaken efforts to monitor CEPA implementation in selected priority areas and to consolidate former and current civil society efforts in the area of CEPA monitoring, intending to strengthen its coordinating role even further in the period to come;
3. reiterate that an effective implementation of the CSP's functions requires constructive and effective communication between the civil society, the Government of the Republic of Armenia ("Government" hereafter), the European Union and the individual Member States through intensification of engagement with the Platform, assessing the current level of engagement insufficient;
4. express regret that the attitude of certain government officials towards the Platform's activities and recommendations continues to be defensive, insufficiently cooperative and sometimes outright non-constructive;
5. to that effect, express hope that the communication established between the EU-Armenia Civil Society Platform and the Government will ultimately institutionalize and that the Platform's recommendations, as reflected in its advisory opinions and reports, will be taken into account in an open and constructive manner;

6. underscore that for the civil society actors engaged in the process, CEPA is not only seen as a framework agreement between two partners, but also as a strong stimulus for Armenia's democratization and European integration and encourage increased involvement of youth in the CEPA implementation process through special academic, graduate, postgraduate programmes and non-degree trainings on Armenia's European integration designed and conducted by Armenian and European universities;
7. welcome the intention of the authorities of Armenia to join the international community in its efforts to prevent and punish the gravest crimes of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity through the ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court;
8. call on the Armenian authorities, the EU and its Member States to take measures to protect the reputation and integrity of Armenia's European civil society platforms from the recently intensified attacks of forces resistant to the idea of the European path for Armenia and seeing Armenia's peace and security in its full and unconditional subjugation to Russia;

On judicial reform, the members of the CSP:

9. express regret about the current progress of the reform of the judiciary, as reflected in disciplining judges for exercising their right to freedom of expression in regard to the actions of the Supreme Judicial Council by means of termination of their judicial powers;
10. call on the authorities to fully ensure the inclusion of specialised civil society organisations in the bodies entrusted with the monitoring of the judicial reform, as well as to ensure direct participation of civil society, European civil society platforms and coalitions in the process of monitoring of CEPA;
11. express grave concern over the recent incidents of brutality by the law enforcement authorities, including in respect of practicing lawyers;

On circular economy, the members of the CSP:

12. call on the Government to take necessary measures in order to align its initiatives in the area of circular economy with the CEPA framework; these should include setting-up of a National Circular Economy Strategy in consultation with EU experts, implementation of Extended Producer Responsibility regulations to encourage sustainable product design, creation of a Circular Economy Fund for financing innovative projects and research, and fostering Public-Private Partnerships to drive innovation and investment;
13. stress the importance to carry out awareness campaigns on green economy, promote the change of production culture among employers matching the principles of circular economy (CE), to promote the application of CE principles in the educational system and of green products in public procurement, to include circular economy in community programs with regard to the three principles¹, to establish necessary standards for defining green products and to implement changes in construction norms in favour of green economy.

¹ Three principles of circular economy are: (1) Eliminate waste and pollution, (2) Circulate products and materials (at their highest value) and (3) Regenerate nature.

On labour rights and on occupational health and safety, the members of the CSP:

14. encourage the government to meaningfully engage with social partners over CEPA implementation, to fully implement International Labor Organizations' fundamental rights and principles in law and in practice, including the ensuring the mechanisms to adequately protect workers' organizations from meddling and obstruction, to further institutionalise social dialogue, establishing the right of consultation and information on national, sectoral and enterprise levels, to implement international obligations regarding the occupational safety and health, and to strengthen labour inspection;

On security situation in the region, the members of the CSP:

15. reiterate that the effective and sustainable democratization and development of any country is possible only in conditions of peace, security and stability. In this respect, it is essential to increase pressure and diplomatic leverage on Azerbaijan to refrain from any military action (the likelihood of which has recently increased in the light of the reports of Azerbaijan accumulating military forces near Nagorno Karabakh and close to its border with Armenia). It is also essential that the rights and security of Armenians in Nagorno Karabakh are fully taken into account to ensure a comprehensive and durable conflict settlement in the interest of all people;
 16. in the light of the aforementioned, welcome the increase of the membership of the EU Monitoring Mission in Armenia and call on the European partners to undertake all necessary steps to contribute to peace and security in the region, to insist on respect by Azerbaijan and Russia of the order of the International Court of Justice and to terminate the blockade of the Lachin corridor, in line with the obligations deriving from the joint statement of 9 November 2020. In addition, call on Azeri authorities to allow an international fact-finding mission on the territory of Nagorno Karabakh to assess the humanitarian and security situation.
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