



## EU-ARMENIA CIVIL SOCIETY PLATFORM

**1<sup>st</sup> meeting, Yerevan, 1 September 2022**

### **JOINT STATEMENT**

The EU-Armenia Civil Society Platform (CSP) is a forum established in accordance with Article 366 of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between the European Union and Armenia. It enables civil society organisations from both sides to contribute to the effective implementation of the Agreement via provision of civil society expertise to decision makers, monitoring the reforms envisioned by the CEPA and informing a wider circle of beneficiaries throughout the implementation process.

The 1<sup>st</sup> and inaugural meeting of the CSP was held on 1 September 2022 in Yerevan, Armenia. The members of the CSP discussed the state of play in the implementation of the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement, held a debate and adopted the CSP Rules of Procedure.

With regard to the **implementation of the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement**, the CSP members:

1. recognise the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement as an important milestone for enhancing the comprehensive political and economic partnership between the EU and Armenia, based on common values and the desire to further strengthen the links and co-operation established in the past;
2. welcome the full application of the Agreement as of 1 March 2021, and note with satisfaction the ratification of the Agreement by all parliaments of the EU Member States;
3. acknowledge the efforts undertaken by the Republic of Armenia in adopting the Roadmaps for the implementation of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement; however, express serious concern about the slow pace in implementing the commitments undertaken by the Armenian side under the CEPA, and urge it to implement these commitments swiftly and efficiently with a view to achieving tangible results for the people of Armenia;
4. emphasise that a broad and deep reform process is a precondition for Armenia's closer relations and cooperation with the EU; in this regard, urge the Armenian authorities to step up their reform efforts to restore the trust of the people of Armenia and of the EU in the capacity of the Armenian authorities to implement profound reform;
5. stress that respect for the democratic principles, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms as enshrined in the relevant international human rights instruments constitute an

essential element of the Agreement and undertake to keep the efforts of the Armenian Government in this area a particular focus of the Platform's attention throughout its existence;

6. acknowledge the progress made by Armenia in the protection of Armenian citizens' right to free and fair elections, still recognise that elections are only one pillar of democracy, and call on the Armenian Government to step up its efforts in achieving full-fledged democracy in Armenia, including through fostering and maintaining dialogue with civil society, employing effective mechanisms for meaningful public participation and ensuring the integrity, accountability and transparency of elected and appointed bodies;
7. stress that the most pressing reforms pertain to the judiciary and public administration, preventing and fighting systemic corruption, ensuring transparency, accountability, resilience and good governance in the management of public finances, improving the competitiveness of Armenian goods, and promoting active labour policies for productive and decent work for all;
8. highlight that for the promotion of fair and decent employment, as well as for fair, just and inclusive economic growth, it is imperative to ensure the full and functional implementation of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work of 1998<sup>1</sup> and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the ratification and full implementation of the ILO International Labour Standards and international agreements defined by Article 274 of the CEPA, and occupational health and safety. This will include the improvement and strengthening of social dialogue, including collective bargaining between employers (and the government as employer) and trade unions, effective cooperation and consultation between social partners during the initiation, development and implementation of public policies, as well as the establishment of mechanisms to prevent and combat the violation of the rights of workers' representatives by employers and state actors. Further steps will also include ratifying and improving the effective implementation of ILO priority conventions, for example by making the labour inspection system functional;
9. express a serious concern that the timeline for the approximation and implementation of the directives on safety and health at work has not yet been decided by the Partnership Council and calls on both Parties to the Agreement to set the mentioned timeline as soon as possible;
10. recall that freedom of media is a fundamental human right; furthermore, note that under conditions of hostile propaganda aimed at discrediting the EU and European values, it is important to support media development to equip them adequately as regards their technical level, independence and informative performance;
11. underline the need for the EU to step up its mediation efforts towards reaching a comprehensive and peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict that will respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Armenia and the right of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh to self-determination and to living in their homeland without any threat to their lives, health and property, thereby bringing lasting peace and stability to the South Caucasus region as an

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<sup>1</sup> Further amended by the International Labour Conference in June 2022 <https://www.ilo.org/declaration/lang--en/index.htm>

important condition for effective reform implementation and the development of bilateral cooperation between Armenia and the EU;

12. call on both Parties to the Agreement to create appropriate mechanisms which would render the benefits of the Agreement available to the people living in the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh; commit to engage with civil society organisations across the administrative boundary lines;
13. stress that social and civil dialogue are important prerequisites for the effectiveness of reforms and welcome the Armenian Government's commitment to involving and consulting the CSP in the intended reform process; in order for the Platform to be able to bring a meaningful contribution to this, invite the Government and the EU to identify solutions to ensure the necessary financial and logistical support for the sustainability of this Platform;
14. recall that the Platform is to be informed of the decisions and recommendations of the EU-Armenia Partnership Council, and look forward to regular contacts with representatives from the Parliamentary Partnership Committee and the Partnership Committee.