

September 8, 2017

Appeal of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Georgian National Platform to the Government of Georgia regarding the Process of Elaboration of the Legislative Framework and Policy for Prevention of Accidents Related to the Water Objects

Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Georgian National Platform hereby applies to the authorities of Georgia to expedite the process of elaboration of the legislative framework and the policy required for prevention of the accidents related to the water objects. In addition, the Platform believes that before elaboration and implementation of the policy, the authorities should undertake immediate actions to make the effective steps for prevention of tragic accidents.

There are many recreational zones in Georgia, which bear life threatening risks due to absence of the safety policy and management of the zones resulting in death of many people and especially youngsters every year. One of the examples of such zones is Tbilisi water reservoir (“Tbilisi Sea”) that has been established as the main recreational zone of the city despite its key functions (water provision and melioration in Tbilisi).

Nowadays, the water reservoir and its infrastructure are managed by the State, municipal and private companies without any planning. Process is chaotic that fully contradicts the management standards required for such recreational object. Some districts of the reservoir are not fit for the recreational use, especially because of the life threatening conditions existing on the territories. There is no common safety plan and its implementation mechanism. There are cases when the safety plans elaborated by some subjects have a merely formal nature. In addition, there is no responsibilities determined among such subjects. In fact, the process of using the recreational resources of the water reservoir is not managed.

However, Tbilisi Sea is not the only dangerous zone. There are many such zones throughout the Country that increases the risk and therefore, responsibility of the State. Many people die due to the improper touristic infrastructure and ignorance of the simple safety norms every year. Despite the fact, there is still no safety system elaborated in this regard. At the same time, the investigations conducted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) regarding the water object related accidents have mostly formal nature. Such investigations are always completed with the resolutions on termination of the cases without determining guilt of the agencies or private companies responsible for the management of the water object and safety of the population.

Moreover, according to the Law of Georgia on Civil Security adopted in 2014, the Ministry of Internal Affairs is obliged to issue a normative act on “Approval of the Regulation for the Protection of Human Life and Safety Rules on Water”. Implementation of the legislation in this field represents one of the most important components of the EU Association Agreement. Despite the fact that the

law provides a deadline for the State to adopt the normative act before December 31, 2017, it is unfortunate that the act has not still been issued considering the many deathly accidents that have already taken place.

Ignorance of the relevant agencies and failure to perform State duties becomes much clearer if we take into account the fact that implementation of such measures does not often require significant financial expenses. Implementation of such measures is related to improvement of quality of life and economic benefit of protection of modern standards of recreation in addition to prevention of life threatening risks.

According to the World Health Organization,¹ drowning is one of the most wide-spread causes of death in the world and therefore, it is one of the most important challenges of public health. However, we, the civil society organizations, believe that it is absolutely possible to prevent such accidents in low-income and poor countries as well.

World Health Organization provides measures for prevention of the drowning caused death. These measures are on the one hand simple and low cost activities and on the other hand, represent very effective prevention mechanisms such as: installation of barriers for controlling the access to the water; raising awareness of public related to the problems and causes of death with focus on vulnerability of children and adolescents. We also recommend to duly mark the dangerous places and place the life vests at such locations.

In addition, for the purposes of preventing mortality, the State shall carry out the exact, timely and comprehensive statistics in relation to such cases and elaborate the accident prevention policy that will be based on the adequate analysis of the problem, establish effective measures and will be addressed to mortality prevention.

Consequently, it is very important to adopt the normative act on “Approval of the Regulation for the Protection of Human Life and Safety Rules on Water” as soon as possible with engagement of the civil society and field experts followed by timely and effective implementation of the regulation in practice.

Georgian National Platform calls upon the Government to:

- Expedite the process of elaboration/improvement of legislative framework and ensure engagement of the civil society and field experts;
- Before creation and implementation of appropriate legislative base, adopt the immediate measures for prevention of tragic cases, namely:
 - ✓ Ensure identification, recording and placement of informational signs in the particularly dangerous zones as well as installation of barriers for controlling/limiting access to water;

¹ World Health Organization, GLOBAL REPORT ON DROWNING PREVENTING A LEADING KILLER (2014)

- ✓ Ministry of Internal Affairs shall carry out the deep and comprehensive investigation of the water object related accidents so to ensure identification of the guilt of the agencies and private companies responsible for the management of the specific water object and safety of people;
- ✓ Ensure implementation of effective rescue and patrolling system at these locations during the season. In addition, placement of safety vests at these places are recommended;
- ✓ Ensure raising of awareness of the problem with focus on the vulnerability of the children and adolescents to this very cause of mortality.

Georgian National Platform expresses its readiness to cooperate with the State and provide assistance in the process of solving the mentioned problem.

Signatory Organizations:

1. Georgian Young Lawyers' Association
2. Human Rights Center
3. Network for Caucasus Environmental Non-Profit Organizations
4. Institute for Development of Freedom of Information
5. Open Society Georgia Foundation
6. Liberal Academy Tbilisi
7. Transparency International – Georgia
8. The Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia
9. Union "Article 42 of the Constitution"
10. Europe Foundation
11. Human Rights House
12. Youth Alternative
13. Local Democracy Agency Georgia
14. World Experience for Georgia
15. International Organization of Human Rights protection and Prisoners social welfare
16. International Press Institute - Georgian national committee
17. United Public Movement "Multinational Georgia"
18. Georgian Trade Union Confederation
19. Public Advocacy
20. Healthy World
21. Association "Toleranti"
22. New Generation for the Democratic Georgia
23. Union of Scientists of Imereti Region "Spektri"
24. Association for Protection of Farmers' Rights
25. International Center for Environmental Research
26. Foundation "Caucasus Environment"
27. Cultural-Humanitarian Foundation "Sokhumi"

Initiators of the application are Georgia Young Lawyers Association (GYLA), Human Rights Center (HRC) and Caucasus Environmental Non-Profit Organizations Network (CENN).

28. Women Enterprise Fund
29. Save the Future Generation
30. Association "Peaceful and Business Georgia"
31. Junior Achievement Georgia
32. Repatriates' Union
33. Abkhazia – My Home
34. Free Choice
35. Women Political Resource Center
36. Association "DEA"
37. Penal Reform International
38. Center "Empathy"
39. Foundation "Genius Loci"
40. Green Movement of Georgia/Friends of the Earth
41. Studio "Monitor"
42. Studio "Re"
43. Civil Forum
44. Caucasian House – Georgia
45. Center for Civil Development and Human Rights
46. Association for the efficient use of the Georgian energy resources
47. Biological Farming Association "Elkana"
48. Association "Atinati"
49. Association of Tea Producers Georgia "Georgian Tea"
50. Partnership for Human Rights
51. Georgian Civil Development Association
52. Research Institute for Geo-Strategy and Euro-Atlantic Integration
53. Journalism Research Center
54. IDP Women Association "Consent"
55. Association "Caucasus Development Group"
56. Caucasian Mosaic
57. People's Harmonious Development Society
58. Union "Anti-Violence Network of Georgia"
59. International Center for Geopolitical Studies
60. Association "Woman and Business"
61. Foundation "Multi- Ethnic Resource Centre on Civic Education Development"
62. Georgian Institute of Politics
63. Association "Psychea"
64. Association "Merkuri"
65. Press Association
66. Youth Association "Droni"
67. International Fund "Lea"
68. Association "Hope"
69. Georgia Association for Regional Broadcasters

Initiators of the application are Georgia Young Lawyers Association (GYLA), Human Rights Center (HRC) and Caucasus Environmental Non-Profit Organizations Network (CENN).

70. Enterprise Innovation Development Center
71. Teachers' Union "Education and Universe"
72. Healthy Children
73. Student Youth Council
74. Association "Green Alternative"
75. Civil Society and Democracy Development Center
76. Coalition for the Independent Life
77. Cultural Relations Center – Caucasian House
78. New Trade Union of Georgian Railway Workers
79. Friendship Bridge – Kartlosi
80. Civil Council for Defense and Security
81. International Business and Economic Development Center
82. Coalition Homecare Georgia
83. Rural Communities Development Agency
84. Civil Forum for Peace
85. International Center for Civic Culture
86. "Disarmament and No Violence"
87. Youth Journalists' Association "New View"
88. Civil Society Development Institute
89. Association "European Studies for the Innovative Development of Georgia"
90. Association "School-Family-Society"
91. Energy Efficiency Center Georgia