

**Appeal of the National Platform of Georgia Regarding the Delay on Decision  
to Grant Visa Free Travel to Georgia**

A realistic prospect of the freedom of movement of Georgian citizens to the EU has been achieved thanks to a hard work of the Government of Georgia and the whole Georgian society, among them all political spectrum including opposition. We as a coalition of pro-European civil society organizations have been actively monitoring and advocating for timely delivery of reforms required by Visa Liberalization Action Plan. Therefore we have the feeling of co-ownership and consequently of the responsibility for the results of the mentioned process.

The Georgian society, which has strong European aspirations and hopes for getting Visa Free travel as soon as possible, aspires first of all to obtain opportunity for people to people contacts with the EU citizens, free travel in order to see and learn better the “promised land” – Europe as deeply rooted in the consciousness of any Georgian.

Support to European Integration in Georgia, reaching its highest level this year. This should be attributed in large extent to high expectations born from the results of more than three years of hard work of the whole society to comply with the requirements set by European Commission in the framework of EU-Georgia visa dialogue.

Georgia is a country, which may serve as a stronghold of democratic values in this extreme South-Eastern corner of Europe. Success of European Integration process in Georgia will have deep impact on the confidence in the EU in this part of the world and influence future positions of the Union in the wider Black and Caspian Sea Regions.

The recently emerged doubts provoked by the delayed decision on a legal action, providing Georgia with Visa Free travel to Schengen area, will strongly affect the optimism and credibility in the EU Institutions. This process fuels and enforces main arguments of the Russian propaganda targeting to challenge European aspirations of Georgian people and is especially dangerous as the date of parliamentary elections approaches.

Possible postponing of consideration of the decision on Georgia by the Council, because of any reasons, including, the demand for a prior adoption of a visa free rapid suspension mechanism, will result in a situation, when the European Parliament is not able to approve it before the summer break, consequently risking to have the solution pending till the election day on October 8, 2016. Such a perspective would definitely become a strong argument in hands of “euro-skeptic” forces, rising their chances to gain support of the frustrated part of the electorate.

Georgian National Platform of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum calls upon:

- The Government of the Netherlands, Presidency of the Council of the EU
- The Government of Slovak Republic, upcoming Presidency of the Council of the EU
- EU Member States
- European Parliament

to support respective decision granting short term visa free travel to Georgian citizens and enforce the decision before September 2016.

Done in Tbilisi on 9<sup>th</sup> of June 2016

***Signatory organisations:***

1. Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies
2. Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA)
3. Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI)
4. European Initiative - Liberal Academy Tbilisi
5. Open Society Georgia Foundation
6. Local Democracy Agency Georgia
7. Georgian Trade Union Confederation
8. World Experience for Georgia
9. EU-Georgia Business Council
10. Georgian Institute of Politics
11. "School-Family-Society" Association
12. Bridge of Friendship – Kartlosi
13. Georgian Association of Regional Broadcasters
14. Youth Alternative
15. Human Rights Centre
16. International Society "Caucasian Mosaic"
17. Psychea
18. Public Advocacy
19. Healthy World
20. Youth for Justice - Georgia
21. Union "Healthy Children"
22. IDP Association "Consent"
23. Community Development Association
24. "Women Enterprise" Fund Georgia
25. International Business and Economic Development Centre
26. Association "MERKURI"
27. Association "Atinati"
28. International Center for Advancement of Research, Technology & Innovation (ICARTI)
29. Civil Society Institute
30. Europe Foundation
31. Cultural-Humanitarian Fund "Sukhumi"
32. Peaceful and Business Caucasus
33. International Center of Geopolitical research
34. Young socialists of Georgia
35. Biological Farming Association "Elkana"
36. Junior achievement of Georgia
37. Center for Social Sciences
38. Center of Development and Democracy
39. Georgia Press Association
40. Association for the efficient use of the Georgian energy resources
41. Association of Tea Producers Georgia "Georgian Tea"
42. Association for the Farmers' Rights Defence
43. Foundation "Multi- Ethnic Resource Centre on Civic Education Development"
44. Foundation "Caucasus Environment"
45. Caucasus Institute for Economic and Social Research
46. Georgian Association "Woman in Business"
47. Caucasian House Georgia
48. Association European Studies for Innovative Development in Georgia

49. Civil Society and Democracy Development Center
50. Save The Future Generation
51. International Fund of Sustainable Development
52. United Public Movement "Multinational Georgia"
53. Association "Imedi"
54. Journalism Recourse Centre
55. Women's Initiatives supporting Group
56. Union "Anti-Violence Network of Georgia"
57. Association of Youth Journalists "New Vision"
58. Institute for the study of nationalism and conflict
59. Association DEA for Disabled Women and Mothers of Disabled Children
60. Caucasus Environmental NGO network (CENN)
61. International Business Development and Investment Promotion Centre
62. Civil Society Development Institute
63. OXFAM Georgia
64. Georgia Alliance for Safe Roads
65. People's Harmonious Development Society
66. Union "Article 42 of the Constitution"
67. The Greens Movement of Georgia
68. Research-Intellectual Club "Dialogue of Generations"
69. Youth Initiation for Democracy
70. Coalition Homecare Georgia
71. Repatriates' Union
72. Free Choice
73. European Integration Forum
74. International Center for Civic Culture
75. Association and Radio "Green Wave"
76. Institute for Euro-Atlantic integration and strategic studies
77. Human Rights House Tbilisi