



## GEORGIAN NATIONAL PLATFORM

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM

### Statement by the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Georgian National Platform

We, the member organizations of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Georgian National Platform, are raising our voices against the legislative initiative to abolish the mandatory gender quota and consider it inadmissible to support this initiative by the Parliament!

On March 22, 2024, the political party "Girchi" submitted to the Parliament of Georgia a legislative initiative to cancel the mandatory gender quota in the "Georgian Election Code". This initiative also applies to the Organic Law "On Political Union of Citizens"—cancelling the 30% addition in budget funding to increase women's participation in politics and strengthen women's organizations in political parties.

We want to emphasize that, despite some progress, discrimination and violence against women up to now remain an acute challenge in the country. Even today, Georgia ranks only 76th in terms of the gender equality index and 125th in terms of women's participation in politics. There is no doubt that abolishing the gender quota will hinder progress and be a step backwards in achieving equality and empowerment of women.

The legislative initiative of the political party "Girchi" contradicts both the will of the voters of Georgia and the Constitution of Georgia, as well as the European integration process and the international agreements:

- Most voters certainly support equal representation of women and men in the parliament. Both our direct experience as local organizations and research (NDI, 2023) confirm voters' support of the rise of women's representation in politics, including the use of a mandatory gender quota;

- Increasing the representation of women in the Parliament is the constitutional goal of Article 11, clause 3 of the Constitution - to achieve essential equality;
- The European Commission, when providing a European perspective to Georgia, defined the 9th goal as promoting gender equality and considered the goal fulfilled precisely as a result of the extension of gender quotas until 2032;
- During the review of Georgia, the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW/C/GEO/CO/6) and the Human Rights Committee (CCPR/C/GEO/CO/5) positively assessed the introduction of the gender quota mechanism. However, the CEDAW and CCPR called Georgia to introduce further efforts for the promotion of women in politics.

We consider it unexemptable that the governing party supports the legislative initiative of "Girchi" and expedited (within 1 week), closed review of the presented package of changes, which makes it impossible to ensure the involvement of civil society and women's rights defenders in this murky political process.