



Declaration of Key Principles of Civil Society Organizations in Georgia

Preamble

Democratic development of Georgia is largely contingent upon effective performance of civil society organizations. A civil society organization represents a voluntary, self-organized, independent union, with the primary mission to create public good. CSOs, as development actors, participate in democratic decision-making processes. They contribute to implementation of positive, result-oriented social changes, which are aimed at eradication of poverty, inequality and marginalization in the country.

The present declaration embraces basic principles of those civil society organizations, which seek to increase contribution of CSOs to further development and full integration of the country into the European family. The declaration has been developed through extensive participation and by mutual agreement of civil society organizations; the document is based upon the Georgian legislation, internationally acknowledged standards, including the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the Istanbul principles for CSO Development Effectiveness. Declaration of basic principles is the output of common experience, gained by thousands of CSOs over decades of performance. Accordingly, the declaration fully relies on the previous experience. It incorporates the basic principles of the Code of Ethics, developed for CSOs in 2005 and the final results of the CSO National Consultation held in Bakuriani in 2010.

Declaration of key principles for civil society organizations is an important step taken towards self-regulation of civil society in Georgia. It envisages working out of specific mechanisms to ensure better compliance with each principle in future, as well as its effective implementation in organizational activities. A similar practice does already exist in Georgian reality. To effectively embed the principles of transparency and accountability, civil society organizations implemented a mechanism in 2016 that obliges signatory organizations to disclose information on scheduled and performed activities, respective timeframe, donors and financing.

With a view to developing the given declaration, a working group has been set up, bringing together various concerned organizations. Employment of a participatory process was one of the main tasks which the working group put on its agenda. To provide for extensive participatory process, working meetings were organized in November–December 2016 in Tbilisi and regional centers (Gori, Kutaisi, Batumi, Zugdidi, Ozurgeti, Akhaltsikhe, Marneuli, Telavi) with participation of local community organizations. The meetings entailed discussion of preliminary draft of the declaration.

The working group used to record all opinions, positions and views expressed by the meeting participants. Overall, more than 200 CSOs took part in the discussions around the declaration. Based on the comments made at the meetings, the working group moved changes to the draft declaration, and afterwards, released the document in electronic form for its ultimate refinement. The final version, which aimed to harmonize opinions of all interested parties, was submitted to the civil society representatives for signature in March 2017.

Key principles:

In order to contribute to democratic development, civil society organizations of Georgia agree on the following principles:

1. Protection of human rights, freedom and social justice

A civil society organization promotes individual and collective human rights, including right to life, freedom, education, development, dignity, decent work, social justice and equality among human beings.

2. The rule of law and democratic governance

A civil society organization strives for establishment of democracy, fair state, rule of law, accountable and transparent governance and self-governance.

3. Recognition and protection of equality

A civil society organization supports equality, fights against discrimination, endorses principles of equal treatment and thus ensures that all marginalized and vulnerable groups are able to realize their individual and shared rights. There are equal opportunities for all people, helping them to turn into full-fledged actors in development processes.

4. Support for sustainable development

With economic, social and ecological interests of the public in mind, CSOs contribute to human well-being, better quality of life and care for future generations. Being important actors of development, they help the government to build public welfare, including access to education and health care for each individual.

5. Citizen participation in public processes

A civil society organization represents needs and requirements of different interest groups and layers of the society. It supports capacity building and full engagement of citizens in the democratic process.

6. Enhancement of knowledge and sharing of experience

A civil society organization takes care of raising awareness and sharing experience, improving methods of learning; it collects and summarizes information on the activities and achievements made by different actors in the field of development with the aim of presenting new approaches and models to the general public.

7. Focus on systemic changes

A civil society organization focuses on impelentation of systemic changes; it facilitates achievement of sustainable, long-term, positive results to secure present and future generations with solid legacy.

8. Civil courage and responsibility

A civil society organization shows courage and is intolerant of any form of violence and discrimination. It promotes civic responsibility and volunteerism in the public.

9. Transparency and accountability

A civil society organization acknowledges its accountability towards its founders, members, supporters, stakeholders, donors and the general public. Information about the mission, members, activities and funding of the CSO is available in an easily understandable form. In its relations with stakeholders, CSO engages in open and clear communication, avoiding all forms of anonymity.

10. Solidarity and equal partnership

A civil society organization promotes an atmosphere of cooperation and joint efforts within the sector in order to achieve sustainable positive results and significant changes for the society.

The cooperation is equal and voluntary, based on shared goals and values, mutual respect, trust, organizational autonomy, long-term partnership and solidarity. Competition among public organizations is sound and based on mutual respect.

11. Openness and innovation

A civil society organization recognizes the diversity of thinking, discrepancies existing among organizations and their goals; it is open to new and different ideas, views and opinions. It introduces innovative approaches and methods that are important for achievement of common objectives.

12. Independence and integrity

A civil society organization is independent in its activities. It defines goals, takes decisions and acts at its own discretion. The organization does not accept any form of informal control by political parties, public institutions and private companies, which could jeopardize its independence and autonomy. CSO is open while cooperating with other actors in the development process.

13. Cooperation with the government and constructive opposition

A civil society organization cooperates with the government in the process of establishing democratic principles, forming and implementing, monitoring and evaluating the public policy, raising public awareness. Meantime, it promotes transparent performance by state institutions, monitors activities of the government, and offers immediate and adequate response to any violation of law and democratic principles.

14. Promotion and protection of peace

A civil society organization promotes establishment of peace and peaceful resolution of conflicts. It dissociates from and condemns any form of violence, terrorism and occupation. It recognizes and protects the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity; it does not cooperate with the occupant states and belligerent forces.

15. Integration of Georgia into the European and Euro-Atlantic structures

A civil society organization supports the country's full integration into the European and Euro-Atlantic structures. It encourages fulfillment of contractual obligations under the EU Association Agreement and the full integration of Georgia into the European family.

16. Support for internal democracy

A civil society organization has clearly defined goals. In its activities, the organization is guided by the principles of democracy, legislative framework of the country, organizational Charter and internal regulations. The CSO takes care of development of its staff members. It strives for establishment of a better civil society. It ensures direct involvement of stakeholders in its activities through application of participatory approaches. The CSO is efficient while using human, material, technical resources and professionalism for attaining set goals and objectives. It constantly evaluates its performance against efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and orientation on results.

Declaration accession and exit procedures:

- A civil society organization that endorses the above-mentioned principles, accedes to the Declaration. Information on the signatories to the Declaration is available to the public.
- A civil society organization that does not share the above listed principles, may quit the declaration. Accordingly, it will be removed from the list of signatories to the declaration.