

Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Armenian National Platform dear members,

As you know ANP 14 members who are as well members of the Civil Society Forum during the regular Assembly of the Armenian national platform held on 25 May of this year submitted a petition requesting to discuss during the same conference as a matter of priority the allegation of my inconsistency with the position of ANP coordinator. That initiative was not backed by the majority of the Assembly participants and its discussion was postponed to the conference scheduled for June 9th. I extend my gratitude to the Assembly for that decision which allowed me to thoroughly address the false allegations brought against me.

Referring to the petition I deem it necessary to note that this process first of all is a result of the most profound structural problems in the ANP and my one-year-long activity as the ANP coordinator has aimed to address them as the roots of those problems are related to both the ANP management and politics.

In particular, they are as follows:

1. Inside the ANP there are organizations that do not support the discourse of Armenia's integration into the European Union and do not tolerate even the slightest criticism of Russia's policy towards Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh.
2. For long years, there have been organizations making part of the ANP, which kept receiving large sums of grants without ensuring their transparency and implementing projects whose efficiency could be a matter of most serious consideration.

Referring to the first systemic problem I find it necessary to remind here that back in May 2022 when I was just elected ANP Coordinator, I underlined that I will spare no effort to turn the Eastern Partnership CSF Armenian National Platform into a champion of Armenia's European integration. For that purpose, I initiated a number of statements officially backing the vision of Armenia's eventual membership in the European Union and NATO, which was approved by the ANP. Judging from the dramatically increasing scope of Armenia's cooperation with the West, including in security, we can only acknowledge the fact that in this respect the ANP has become one of the most progressive and forward-looking organizations in this country.

In the meantime, during the past year of my office, on multiple occasions, my conviction has only gotten firmer that the ANP needs sweeping reforms or even vetting. The thing is that for unknown reasons at different periods, different people, who in fact have nothing in common with the values of open society, democracy, human rights, transparency, and alike, adopted by Europe, have infiltrated into this most prestigious civil society platform of the European Union. Instead, they are engaged essentially in the consistent promotion of one nation's interests, which is an adversary to the European value system, and those people do it with Western funds. As for European integration, its interpretation for most of them in all likelihood is limited to receiving European – and Western in general – grants and/or participation in Eastern Partnership CSF conferences held in various European capital cities. The names of some of those persons are among the signatories of the named petition. In the meantime, there are also people among the signatories who have not made enough effort to check basic facts before signing such a document, containing the most serious allegations against the ANP Coordinator. In order to illustrate my point, I bring to your attention the part of the voting records of 10 March of this year on ANP's

statement on the three-month-long blockade of the Lachin corridor, murder of the police officers in Artsakh and recent developments in Georgia, which refers to the signatory organizations. Let me remind you that in this [Statement](#) the ANP called on the government to:

1. Initiate a process of withdrawal from the CSTO, Eurasian Economic Union, and from military and economic alliance formats and agreements with Russia on the grounds of Russia's consistent and malicious violation of its alliance obligations.

2. To apply to the European Union for signing an Association Agreement and a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area Agreement, as well as for seeking candidate status for EU membership.

3. To apply for Armenia's NATO membership.

<i>N</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Organization</i>	<i>Vote 1st reading</i>	<i>Vote 2nd reading</i>
1	Ashot Melikyan	Committee to Protect Freedom of Speech	Against	Against
2	Mikayel Hovhannisyan	Eurasia Partnership Foundation	Did not vote	Did not vote
3	Gayane Abrahamyan	For Equal Rights Education Center NGO	Did not vote	Did not vote
4	Nune Sargsyan	Media Initiatives Center	Did not vote	Did not vote
5	Artur Papyan	Media Diversity Institute	Against	Did not vote
6	Inga Zarafyan	Ecolur NGO	Did not vote	Against
7	Amalya Hambardzumyan	Khazer ecology-cultural NGO	Against	Against
8	Temik Khalapyan	Trtu Cultural NGO	Against	Did not vote
9	Anahit Gevorgyan	Martuni Women's Community Council	Did not vote	Did not vote
10	Abraham Artashasyan	Community Financers' Union	Did not vote	Did not vote
11	Susanna Shahnazaryan	Goris Press Club	Against	Did not vote
12	Liana Asoayan	Blejan nature protection NGO	Did not vote	Did not vote
13	Diana Yeghiazaryan	Federation of Youth Clubs	Did not vote	Against
14	Naira Arakelyan	Armavir Development Center	Did not vote	Did not vote

As per the statute of the ANP, any member organization is free to have its own position on European integration, including opposition to it or to advocate for Armenia's accession to, for instance, the Russia-Belarus alliance. Experience of several years has shown that it makes no sense to expect that organizations that do not uphold European values, will display honesty and integrity and leave this platform in view of the incompatibility of values. Therefore, such a purge should be implemented through amendments to the statute. The amendments consensually proposed by the ANP's working group on statute improvements could have drawn a red line in the matter of that kind of organization's presence in the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Armenian National Platform. Through those amendments in the statute, the process would have been launched of elimination of organizations that do not indeed uphold European values and view the European Union simply as a contributor serving their business interests. An honest look at the situation would leave no doubts that the mentioned petition was and is targeted at blocking such amendments. I consider it unacceptable the ANP's return to "good old" practices of 2013, when, following Serzh Sargsyan's overnight shift of Armenia's course from the EU association to Russia's Customs Union, only 7 or 8 people from the overall membership of over 200 were present at the protest rally held by the ANP. The rest were too busy digesting European and US grant resources.

The allegation that I as the ANP Coordinator have tried to politicize the Platform by “making political statements, single-handedly holding talks with political parties, initiating and conducting events, signed documents of political relevance” is likewise groundless. The cooperation between civil society and political parties has become a normal practice in democracies and cannot by any means be labeled as an attempt to politicize the ANP. Moreover, ANP’s cooperation with parties upholding and promoting European values cannot be detrimental to the Platform’s goals. In order to prove the baselessness of such allegations I would bring one of the many examples of such cooperation inside Eastern Partnership countries, namely, the Coordination Council in Belarus, set up following the rigged elections of 2020, which included both politicians and civil society activists. By the way, the Eastern Partnership CSF Steering Committee by that time made a statement calling on the Belarus authorities to engage in a constructive dialogue with the named Coordination Council. Please take note that all my public statements made in the position of the ANP Coordinator are published on the ANP’s Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/csfanp>. My concepts expressed there do not contradict the official position of the ANP articulated in the Platform’s declarations. The same refers to those Conference declarations under which I signed as president of the Free Citizen NGO, and also/or Eastern Partnership CSF ANP Coordinator.

My efforts at consolidation of the civil society and political actors championing Armenia’s full accession into the European Union have received favorable reactions from many not only in international organizations and Western countries but also in the very Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, whose Secretariat placed the English version of the statement by the Conference of Democratic Forces on its official website.

Could the CSF's first working group coordinator’s participation in the Armenian National Congress’s pre-election conference in 2021 be assessed as “politicization” of the Eastern Partnership CSF? And how to deal with the fact that the Swedish ForumCiv, with which on May 15 of this year we held a workshop on the Eastern Partnership, had asked us explicitly to invite among others representatives of political parties. Finally, from the 10 people they selected as the Armenian delegation scheduled to visit Stockholm in June, one is the head of a political party /European Party/. Does this imply that ANP members included in the delegation will “get politicized”? Opposition parties that are not represented in the parliament and in the Government, according to various international classifications are considered a constitutive part of that country’s civil society. Meanwhile the practice of shying away from political parties, and refraining from cooperating with them for the sake of not “getting politicized” is a narrative introduced by the former authoritarian regimes, which some players of civil society have not yet gotten rid of.

A second systemic problem, as I mentioned above, is that some civil society entities, including the majority of the SCOs, which have signed the petition, for years have been miles away from European values while they kept receiving grants from Western, including European states, and the efficiency of those grants in terms of Armenia’s European integration and bringing the country into the conformity with EU standards and values have been questionable and needs a separate inquiry. Needless to say, that those organizations, unlike many other members of the ANP make no contribution to covering the expenses of the Platform. As the ANP Coordinator, in my contacts with various international partners, I keep raising this issue and I am going to initiate an inquiry on the efficiency of the projects implemented as well as on transparency and accountability on the expenditures of financial resources received as grants by those organizations, among others. I am convinced, that upon enquiring on my initiative the issue of non-confidence in me has been schemed also for the purpose of derailing that process. In this clarification of mine, I have attached a note based on figures collected from official sources on the financial flows of the signatory organizations in 2020 - 2022.

N	Name of the organization	Yearly inflows /million drams/		
		2020	2021	2022
1	Committee to Protect Freedom of Speech NGO	38,104,279	26,306,261	47,182,641
2	Eurasia Partnership Foundation	651,384,000	1,174,140,000	?
3	For Equal Rights Education Center NGO	86,498,578	138,508,450	?
4	Media Initiatives Center	604,180,241	471,235,766	331,948,071
5	Media Diversity Institute	41,584,796	47,246,486	39,869,939
6	Ecolur NGO	30,778,633	45,431,531	32,808,115
7	Khazer ecology-cultural NGO	23,214,641	22,440,272	28,659,759
8	Trtu Cultural NGO	-	-	
9	Martuni Women's Community Council	91,735,913	109,871,133	362,721,976
10	Community Financers' Union	327,308,213	419,039,074	120,047,216
11	Goris Press Club	40,317,784	86,435,155	67,507,088
12	Blejan nature protection NGO	3,133,400	9,312,600	
13	Federation of Youth Clubs	6,180,800	-	-
14	Armavir Development Center	156,224,805	447,589,719	

Here are also details on the financial flows of the Free Citizen CISC NGO, led by me, which were higher in 2021 when I was not holding the position of the ANP Coordinator (I was elected in May 2022) and this disproves the doubt by Gayane Abrahamyan, one of the signatories of the petition, voiced during the ANP Conference on 25 May that I have used the ANP Coordinator's position to improve my organization's financial condition.

2017-2018: 38,7 mo. drams (from contracts signed in 2016)

2019: 15,5 mo. drams (from contracts signed in 2018)

2020: 14,8 mo. drams (from contracts signed in 2018 and 2019)

2021: 3,3 mo. drams (from contracts signed in 2020)

2022: 22,7 mo. drams (from contracts signed in 2021)

2023: expected 21,5 mo. drams, of which 12 mo. drams from contracts signed in 2021; 9,5 mo. drams from contracts signed in 2023

As for the allegations mentioned in the petition, in the first point, the signatories articulate in colorful language that "Hovsep Khurshudyan being the ANP Coordinator did not hesitate even for a second to assume the position of the ANP Secretariat's Chairman of the Board" considering it a conflict of interest. I have to cite the regulations of the ANP and the ANP Secretariat stipulating that since the establishment of the latter (in 2014, see the Statute attached) the ANP Coordinator concurrently assumes the office of the ANP Secretariat's Chairman of the Board (see the ANP Secretariat union of legal entities' Statute clause 7.9). For some unknown reason, this circumstance was left unnoticed by all the signatories. In any case, concurrently holding both positions cannot be assessed as a conflict of interest since as per the CSF Statute clause 7.6 (according to the ANP Statute, that of CSF has superior legal force) a clash of interest takes place when a member of the Steering Committee "is involved in the decision-making process regarding that same person's remuneration for a task which is not within their scope of regular duties as a Committee member" or "is involved in such actions which compete with the interest of the Eastern Partnership CSF ANP or are detrimental to them". As for the issue of chairing the executive body's sessions, since the very creation of the ANP, it was traditionally done by the ANP Coordinator and it is only ridiculous to artificially make a problem out of an attempt to turn an established practice into a regulation. In any case, holding another unpaid position is just another heavy duty, and lest anyone think that I dreamed of the position of chairman of the NGO board, immediately after the meeting on June 9, I am going to resign from this position. It's an easy issue to resolve: I should have

been just said that some organizations have concerns about my holding these two positions before suddenly making allegations.

As for the rotation of the working group coordinators, I have to note that regular elections are fundamental for the survival of democratic societies and both a stipulation of the ANP Statute clause 3.14.1 (once in two years). This also enshrines all ANP members' right to run for the office of a working group coordinator and be elected. However, since the Statute's mentioned clause contradicts another stipulation of the same clause (which says that the coordinator should be elected immediately after the selection of CSF Armenian delegates) I, accepting the legitimacy of the first group coordinator's arguments, have decided to eliminate the point on selection from the agenda of the working group session and discuss it at the Steering Committee's session. Meanwhile, the Steering Committee session made a decision to reschedule the selection for November (against which, by the way, have voted only I, Mikayel Hovhannisyanyan, and SC co-chair Irina Sukhiy) it became clear that this collision in the Statute should somehow be resolved and the only way is making amendments which is a normal process for any structure. Claims that I have conferred working group sessions without notifying their respective coordinators are slander and I have attached the necessary facts proving it, namely the e-mail correspondence. It is clear from those correspondences that I not only informed both coordinators about the planned WG meetings in advance (3-20 days ago) but also that in the case of WG 3, I asked the coordinator of the group to organize it, which she did.

In general, the level of absurdity of all allegations demonstrates that the authors of the petition signed by 14 organizations apart from the goals declared by them had also a hidden agenda of political nature which is to stop the ANP Coordinator's public engagement through political persecution.

As for the matter of the ANP Secretariat's executive director, it is not the competence of the ANP Assembly to discuss it. The ANP Congress does not elect the executive director and therefore the ANP cannot be the body designated for discussing that official's performance. The only thing that I can say on the Executive Director of the Secretariat in the current format is that I deeply regret that when hiring her I did not ask for a recommendation letter from her long-time employer, the Open Society Foundations Armenia. Meanwhile, the legislation on Civil Society Organizations does not provide for any norm regarding the organization's seal. The ANP Secretariat NGO's Statute likewise does not have any regulation on storing and using its own seal. In case of necessity, the NGO governing bodies will discuss these issues. In the meantime, according to RA legislation, the fact of not having access to the seal does not by any means make it impossible for the Executive Director to implement their official duties, and thus allegations regarding this are also baseless.

Equally baseless also claim that "failure to transfer relevant tax credentials to Executive Director Ani Kojoyan, as well as to change the organization's bank account name after she took the position have impaired the Secretariat's normal functioning".

Thus Ani Kojoyan is given the authority to observe and thus supervise the totality of document turnover of the online office, including the financial reports and reading letters sent by tax authorities. Meanwhile signing financial reports is an accountant's competence. Since Ani Kojoyan's hiring not a single case of delay in producing financial reports to tax authorities has ever taken place. The same refers to bank transfers, which the accountant implements duly in accordance with the deadlines mentioned in the relevant employment contracts or in the financial documents signed by the executive director or other accounting documents signed by the accountant at the request of the executive director.

After all, the hiring of both the executive director and the communication officer was done through a competitive process and I have experienced no personal issues with either of them. My requirements from them were exclusively about not performing duly their job duties and you can see it yourselves

from the e-mail correspondence attached. However, both my and the Secretariat board members' advice to continue carrying out her duties in a more constructive way was systematically disregarded and her joining this initiative demonstrates that instead of making due improvements in her work habits, she has chosen to make use of political discords between me and some members of the Platform to create a favorable situation for her, which is namely my removal from office on grounds of inconsistency with the position.

I attach to this clarification – with the consent of the ANP Secretariat NGO board members – materials referring to my initiative on applying disciplinary sanction on Ani Kojoyan as well as referring to the board session of the ANP Secretariat NGO, voice records of the session and select letters from work correspondence.

As to the last point of allegations, I regret that 14 signatories are guided by hearsay when bringing forward accusations. I have never demanded Ani Kojoyan resign. Meanwhile interpreting as a pressure the requirement to duly perform one's own job duties for a quite decent salary in Armenian standards is at least manipulation. Let me remind you that Ani Kojoyan does not personify the ANP Secretariat as she claimed at the ANP Conference on 25 May (voice recording is attached) but only the executive director of the ANP Secretariat NGO and therefore cannot be considered as an ANP governing body.

The ANP Secretariat NGO has hired an executive director to perform her duty and not for engaging in a political struggle against the ANP Coordinator and the ANP Secretariat Board Chairman instead of working. With a dysfunctional executive director, it is impossible to either fulfill the tasks or implement projects set before the ANP. In case the 14 signatories want to intervene in the ANP Secretariat's management, then let me be kind enough to follow on a day-to-day basis the working relationship in the ANP Secretariat NGO and ensure that the executive director is implementing her job duties fully and at a satisfactory level.

Ani Kojoyan's job contract includes a TOR which directly mentions a duty of fundraising by the executive director. However, up to this day, no grant or other funding has been raised by her. Due to that, I cannot implement points 1, 3, 6, and 7 in the program I designed, as these are directly linked to fundraising:

- *Stepping of the Eastern Partnership CSF ANP internal engagement, encouragement of more involvement of the ANP members in the implementation of the Eastern Partnership programs, EU-Armenia and CEPA agreement provisions, and development of institutional mechanisms for fundraising. The ANO should become a protagonist of Armenia's European integration.*
- *Launching new activities aimed at the implementation of the goals targeted by the [Eastern Partnership CSF 2020-2030 Strategy](#).*
- *Raising Armenian public awareness of the CEPA, Eastern Partnership, and the ANP, motivating new Civil Society Organizations, particularly regional ones, for the purpose of their more active involvement in the ANP activities.*
- *Supporting ANP organizations to develop their skills of writing successful grant applications, finding partners in the EU and Eastern Partnership countries, and starting cooperation with them as well as promoting their advocacy capacities.*

This is not the only duty that she had assumed but failed to carry out. By the way, it has been over two months since I requested to submit a report on her performance since assuming the office, however to this day she systematically fails to comply with the request.

In order to understand how many of the signatories get funding from the Eurasia Partnership Foundation and the volume of that funding in each case, I will have to officially request from that

organization to provide that information, which is not published on their website, the latter being yet another instance of such “transparency” on the part of the Open Society. Meanwhile, this is important if we want to understand the extent of influence exerted on the signatories by their material interests and their financial dependence on the Eurasia Partnership Foundation.

I also propose to submit a universal income declaration before the Conference and make it into an ANP Statute provision that all ANP coordinators and people running for that office should submit such a declaration on their income and assets.

Dear ANP members,

I beg your pardon for such a lengthy presentation, but I had no other option than to factually address all the allegations on political issues, management, and micromanagement and expose the real reasons behind the hasty initiative of a no-confidence vote, which has nothing in common with the interest and goals of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Armenian National Platform. It also becomes clear why the signatories of the petition insist upon holding a discussion right away without giving me time enough for searching for and providing hard facts and counterarguments. Once again, I am thankful to the Conference for rejecting that request and giving me this opportunity.

Thus, I reject all the allegations in the petition signed by 14 people, and consider them as made-up, based on slander and following obscure goals. Therefore, I call on the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Armenian National Platform to deny support to the signatories’ non-transparent and anti-democratic course of action, which is both inconsistent with the open society’s principles and values and also is aimed at disrupting the recently established environment of stability and constructive interaction inside the ANP through pointless discussions led by fake agenda.

Sincerely

Hovsep Khurshudyan

ANP Coordinator

ANP Secretariat NGO Chairman of the Board

Yerevan, 30 May 2023