NGO Statement on the Self-Governance Reform Process

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We, the non-governmental organizations listed below, think that local self-governance by citizens is a supreme value on which the whole system of democratic governance is based. The right of citizens to be involved in the management and regulation of local community issues is shared by all democratic states. Highly legitimate local governments have the power to secure efficient, citizen-centered governance and create a favorable environment for local community development.

The key basis for a country's development is strong self-governance, whereby citizens through local elective self-government bodies exercise their most important right as enshrined in the Constitution of Georgia and the European Charter of Local Self-Government ratified by Georgia.

We cannot share the opinion that the tackling of local needs by citizens independently may foster separatism and split the country apart. This argument has been used by each and every governing political force since the 1990s for their own interest in an effort to tailor the law to their own needs, which has led to the 'façade' self-government system, an absolutely inefficient body unable to do anything for the citizens.

Although we have issues with various articles of the Code of Local Self-governance, we deem any attempt to discredit the reform unacceptable, especially when citizens' right to exercise self-governance does not run counter to Georgia's national interests and its sovereignty; on the contrary, it serves the purpose of balancing vertical governance and introducing citizen-focused self-governance.

Considering the above mentioned questions:

- We call upon the Georgian government and Parliament not to yield to those intent on discrediting the local self-governance idea and not to suspend the reform process;
- And we urge them to keep promises made before the elections and create for the next local elections a regulatory environment allowing citizens to exercise their rights in line with the laws and Constitution of Georgia, urging public officials to use efficient forms of self-governance on the one hand and control government-appointed officials on a regional level on the other.

1. International Center for Civic Culture (ICCC)
2. The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED)
3. Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center (EMC)
4. The Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF)
5. Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI)
6. Transparency International - Georgia (Ti)
7. Association Civitas Georgica
8. Local Democracy Development Network
9. Civic Integration Foundation
10. Community Development Center
11. Civil Society Institute (CSI)
12. Center for Training and Consultancy (CTC)
13. Economic Policy Research Center (EPRC)
14. Civil Society Research and Development Center
15. Green Alternative
16. Centre of Strategic Research and Development of Georgia (CSRDG)
17. Liberal Academy Tbilisi Foundation
18. Public Defender
19. Green Caucasus
20. Gori Information Center
21. TASO Foundation
22. Public Movement Multinational Georgia

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