We, the undersigned, would like to respond to the statements of former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili in the TV-program Week 20/30 about acting and former leaders of the civil society organizations.

The former Prime Minister continues a series of statements against non-governmental organizations. He accused Eka Gigauri and Kakha Kozhoridze of cooperating with the opposition. His statements discredit the entire civil sector. Although his accusations are ungrounded, it may encourage other individuals, especially government officials, to use the same rhetoric against NGOs and deter active civic engagement in significant public developments. As we have already observed, such statements from the ex-PM are often followed by unsubstantiated allegations from politicians and public officials.

The recent verbal attacks against NGOs make us think that we are dealing with a lack of respect for different opinions and not with criticism, which we would have accepted with pleasure. This approach leaves no space for the primary tasks of civil society organizations – drawing public attention to the government's mistakes and systemic problems.

The fact that position of NGOs occasionally coincides with the opinions of various political powers does not indicate at their partiality. If that was a true, we would have to refuse the campaigns and initiative which we implemented before 2012 Parliamentary Elections. Among those initiatives was first part of the Campaign This Affects You, which aimed to amend the election law and establishment of competitive environment. It is regretful that we have to make clarifications about these issues.

We do hope that government representatives will not perceive statements of the former PM as instructions and they, in accordance to the law and democracy principles, will continue constructive and result-oriented cooperation with CSOs.

1. Civil Development Agency (Sida)
2. International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED),
3. Georgian Young Lawyers Association,
4. IDFI,
5. Open Society - Georgia,
6. Human Rights Center,
7. Identity
8. Economic Policy Research Centre
9. Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center
10. Green Alternative
11. Georgia’s Hall of Agriculture
12. Institute of Media
13. Center for Development and Democracy (CDD)
14. Regional Network of Civil Society (R-CSN)
15. Association of Civil Initiatives
16. Association Spektri
17. Association DEA
18. National Network for the Protection from Violence – Mtskheta-Mtianeti Regional Committee
19. Society Biliki
20. Stepantsminda
21. Kvemo Kartli Public-Information Center
22. Step Kharagauli
23. Step Forward
24. Union Spektri
25. Ozurgeti Young Scientists Club
26. We For Healthy Future
27. Racha Lechkhumi and Kvemo Sveneti Local Self-Governance Resource-Center
28. Akhaltsikhe Youth Center
29. Democrat Meskhs Union
30. Union of Democratic Development of Georgia
31. Regional Development Center
32. Kutaisi Information Center

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