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Statement on the EU-Ukraine Civil Society Platform official launch

The EU-Ukraine Civil Society Platform (hereinafter the Platform) – the joint civil society institution established under the Articles 469-470 of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement – having gathered for its Inaugural Meeting on April 16, 2015 in Kyiv after comprehensive one-year preparatory process, announces the official commencement of its activities. The Platform, together with the Association Council, the Association Committee and the Parliamentary Association Committee is one of the official institutions, established in the frames of the Association Agreement.

The Platform, composed of representatives of NGOs, employers' associations and trade-unions both from Ukraine and the EU, is charged with the task of ensuring the civil society oversight of, and contribution to, the Association Agreement implementation. The Platform will meet twice a year, alternatively in Brussels and Ukraine, and will exchange views and prepare reports on the topics of crucial importance for civil society under the implementation process. It will forward its recommendations to the EU-Ukraine Association Council and other relevant bodies in Ukraine and the EU and communicate them to wider society.

We, members of the Platform, believe that EU integration is the task not only for the Government but for the whole society. The active involvement of civil society – a true and strong driver of the European integration reforms – into the Association Agreement implementation will raise the quality of decision-making, ensure its transparency and consideration of interests of different stakeholders, as well as help bring the reform process closer to people.

The Platform will meet for the second time in the end of 2015, presenting its review of the Association Agreement implementation, and two thematic reports: first, on the energy sector, second, on the rule of law and anti-corruption policy as the chosen priority topic of interest both for Ukraine and the EU. We will pay specific attention to the issues of improvement of investment climate as well as the social component of ongoing transformation.

During the next months it will also work on the establishment of effective cooperation and communication mechanisms with other stakeholders of the implementation process. These activities will be brought further by the ongoing operation of the 15 thematic working groups of the Ukrainian side of the Platform.

As far as the second convocation of the Platform is to be elected this autumn, we will undertake further efforts to ensure engagement of the most active and determined civil society forces through transparent and accountable procedures of the members' elections.

We commit ourselves to work in an open manner, engaging all interested civil society organizations willing to contribute to the Association Agreement implementation.

We urge the other bilateral bodies under the Association Agreement – the Association Council, the Association Committee and the Parliamentary Association Committee - as well as the Governmental Office for European Integration and other responsible institutions in Ukraine and EU – to establish true partnerships with the Platform in order to benefit from the available civil society expertise, bring in views of different societal groups and ensure the transparent and participatory nature of the implementation process, in line with EU principles and values.

As a matter of political standpoint, we fully support the idea of full-fledged European perspective of Ukraine based on the Article 49 of the Treaty of the European Union. We will also support visa-free travel for Ukrainian citizens as soon as technical criteria provided by the EU are met.

We support full-scale implementation of the Association Agreement, including DCFTA, within the announced terms (January 2016).

It is our belief that only through making the whole society the owner of the EU integration reforms it will be possible to make the EU perspective of Ukraine come true. In this sense, public participation in the Association Agenda implementation will be both a test for the maturity of Ukrainian policy-making and a mechanism to accelerate the reform process.