

Joint Statement of the Business Associations

April 17, 2024
Tbilisi, Georgia

We, the below listed business associations,

reaffirm Georgian business sector's unequivocal support for Georgia's EU integration, which bears particular importance for a long-term stability, prosperity and development of the country;

once again welcome historic decision of December last year on granting the EU candidate status to Georgia and applaud efforts of all parties to this end;

underscore the significance of capitalizing on this decision by working together in order to resolve remaining issues and start negotiations on the EU accession in the near future;

believe that stepping up our efforts in this regard is particularly important in view of alarming regional developments and national security challenges;

acknowledge notable role our country's partners and donor organizations have played in Georgia's economic, social and democratic transformation, since regaining its independence in 1991; This assistance has been often indispensable and was rendered both through government as well as civil society;

consider that strong civil society is at the core of modern democratic and pluralistic state. CSOs play an important role in providing much needed services to the public; they also help to improve policies in the interests of the people and are crucial for checks and balances system. We particularly note that donors, through CSOs and the state institutions, have done a tremendous job in improving infrastructure, advancing quality education, empowering SMEs, promoting green economy as well as supporting most vulnerable segments of our population, such as women, children and persons with disabilities.

are following with concern re-initiation of the law, titled – „on transparency of foreign influence“ - in the Georgian parliament that has been withdrawn last year;

take note of the statements from our closest allies and strategic partners, as well as those of the representatives of international organizations, who have been stalwart supporters of our sovereignty and democratic transition, saying that adoption of the draft law on transparency of foreign influence would be inconsistent with Georgia's EU aspirations and will contradict efforts of strengthening the democratic institutions in Georgia.

cannot but concur with those, questioning whether ensuring transparency of CSO and media financing truly requires a special, additional registration and a separate register labeling them as an organization under foreign influence.

share concerns that the law, once implemented would stir suspicion and distrust toward these organizations and would stigmatize them, thus having a chilling effect on their activities.

Having said this,

We urge the parliament to carefully weigh the impact of adoption of the draft law and refrain from the actions that will further polarize our society and undermine Georgia’s European integration prospects.

