



**AZERBAIJANI
NATIONAL PLATFORM**

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM

09 July 2021
Baku city, Azerbaijan

APPEAL

On behalf of the Azerbaijan National Platform of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum

Azerbaijan was one of the first countries which joined the Open Government Partnership (OGP) international initiative and signed the Open Government Declaration in 2011. Having so far been signed by 78 countries, the Open Government Declaration states that nations around the world are increasingly seeking for more open, effective, accountable and transparent governance, greater civic participation, civil liberties and an effective system to fight against corruption.

In order to increase transparency and improve open government promotion, the Government of Azerbaijan has so far been able to contribute to international exchanges and international efforts in this areas through the 3 adopted National Action Plans on OGP Promotion, covering the years [2012-2015](#), [2016-2018](#) and [2020-2022](#).

At the OGP Steering Committee meeting, held on 04 May 2016 in Cape Town, South Africa, the issue of Azerbaijan's membership in the OGP was considered and its status was reduced from full membership to [inactive member](#) country. The committee cited restrictions on the activities of civil society institutions in Azerbaijan as the main reason for taking this step. The Steering Committee considered that the shrinking space for the activities of NGOs undermines the principles and values of the NGO. As a follow-up to this decision, the Committee submitted the [Recommendation](#) to the Government of Azerbaijan, dated on 25 September 2017, giving the time to remedy the problems. Unfortunately, no steps have been taken to implement the Recommendation.

At the meeting of the OGP Steering Committee, held on 5-6 December 2018, the other [Resolution](#) on the membership of Azerbaijan was adopted, giving the country another respite. The Resolution contains a number of conditions for the restoration of country membership in the organization, including the creation of the enabling environment for the civil society operation.

It should be noted that the appeals of civil society members to the members of the Steering Committee played an important role in the decision to give Azerbaijan another respite to fulfill its obligations. We consider it necessary to note that in the history of the OGP, no country has ever been given a right for such a long delay. Since Azerbaijan has remained inactive for the last 5 years, it is the last chance for the country to regain membership at OGP.

Currently, the [2020-2022 National Action Plan to promote open government](#) is being implemented in Azerbaijan. One of the conditions of the OGP Steering Committee for the restoration of the status of our country is the need to fully implement the National Action Plan (NAP) by 31 August 2021. Because, according to the Resolution, the NAP will be evaluated by the Independent Reporting Mechanism and the Steering Committee will make the final decision on the status based on the opinion of the IRM.

It should be noted that the [letter](#) dated on 27 April 2021 sent to the Azerbaijani government on behalf of the OGP head Sanjay Pradhan reiterated the importance of full implementation of Azerbaijan's commitments, including the need to address the problems of civil society by 31 August 2021.

There is less than 2 months left until the expiration of the period specified in the Resolution. Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the latest 2020-2022 National Action Plan are commitments to remove restrictions for operation of civil society. Fulfillment of these commitments by the end of August can contribute to the restoration of Azerbaijan's status.

Reenforcing the undeniable role of civil society in OGP processes as well as in the development of the country and protection of national interests, on behalf of the Azerbaijan National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum we call the Government of Azerbaijan to remove restrictions on civil society operation and express our interest in supporting the Government in this process.