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Speech Revaz Charkviani, Head of the Youth Agency of Georgia

Informal exchange of views on “strengthening democracy through youth engagement in the Council of Europe and its member States”

Thursday, 23 January 2020

Good morning, distinguished guests, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great pleasure and honour to be here with you today.

As you already know, one of the priorities of the Georgian Presidency is to promote the Youth Engagement in the democratic processes and I would like to point out that it is not a random choice, but a reflection of recent developments in the youth field of Georgia.

Last year it was decided by the Government to initiate the fundamental reform of youth sector. I was appointed as an advisor to the Prime Minister on youth affairs and became in charge of this process.

After the appointment, I started working with my team on a vision of reform. We decided to work on the development of an ecosystem of well-functioning youth sector, that will be based on European countries and institutions standards and best practices and will ensure sustainability and effectiveness of the youth field.

Later, we have developed three-year fundamental reform strategy and an action plan, which is divided into four phases.

The first phase of the reform is already completed successfully.

It had an aim to consolidate all governmental resources in the youth field in one organization. therefore, it was decided to transfer youth issues from the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports to the new Youth Agency that was established under the Prime Minister's Office. Youth Agency took over the youth portfolio and now it is responsible for the:

- development,

- implementation

- and coordination of Youth Policy, on the national and local level, as well as for the reforming of youth sector in Georgia.

The second phase of reform, involves working on the youth sector development strategies, action plans and to consolidate Georgian youth sector around the idea to develop the model of youth field ecosystem based on the principles of co-management and Council of Europe's norms and standards.

The third phase, which we are starting from March, is the piloting of the projects with the aim to achieve reform goals and objectives. The projects will be implemented in ten selected municipalities of all ten regions of Georgia

On the later stage of our 3-year reform process we want to implement principles and practices of co-management system in the youth policy development, implementation and monitoring process.

We believe that the establishment of co-management system that allows meaningful participation of young people will ensure the sustainability of a youth sector. And co-management system of the Council of Europe is a great example of it.

Time does not permit me to go into too much details of our reforms. So, instead of it, now I am going to briefly share my and youth agency's vision on youth participation.

I deeply believe that if we want to have modern, developed and democratic country and if we want our society to be part of modern civilization, it is absolutely necessary to engage and involve young people in every aspect of our life. To support their meaningful participation in public and private sectors and make them the main driving force.

This is where I see the role of government: to support youth engagement and participation in every field, involve them in decision-making process and create such an environment that allows them to realize their potential and fulfil their visions.

But I would like to indicate that Youth issues is not only a priority for the youth Agency but the whole government of Georgia is working on this direction. As an example, I would like to share with you, PM's Advisor on Human Rights, Ms Lela Akiashvili's and her office's vision on youth engagement as it is very relevant to the goals of the Council of Europe youth sector strategy. They have initiative to engage youth in Human Rights protection work under the Prime-Minister's Human Rights Council. The Council is the key mechanism in the country coordinating the government's human rights protection work. They make clear that YOUTH is a cross-cutting priority among other core priorities and they firmly believe that the engagement of young people in promoting human rights is not only of vital importance, but also is an excellent way to bring the idealized understanding of human rights to the practical level of daily life. Youth can play vital role in establishing human rights based approaches and contribute to strengthening sustainable democracy.

At the end, I would like to share with you one more important news. Currently, Youth Agency and the Parliament of Georgia in cooperation with other stakeholders and technical assistance of UN office in Georgia, are working on the development of new youth policy concept for 2020-2030, which will be submitted to the Parliament for approval in this spring session of Parliament. This document that will be adopted during the Georgian chairmanship will become main document determining youth policy development in Georgia for the next ten years.

Until the end of this year, Youth Agency in partnership with UNFPA will elaborate national cross-sectoral youth strategy and its action plan for 2020-2023 for implementation. This process will be participatory, where the line ministries, civil society organizations and young people will be involved as in the development as well in the implementation and we will take into consideration all the recommendations prepared by Youth policy advisory mission to

Georgia. That was organised on 26-28 September 2019 with the aim to provide advice to the Youth Agency on the development of a participatory youth policy based on the Council of Europe's norms and standards.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Council of Europe, CDEJ members and youth department for their continued support and cooperation. And express my gratitude towards the members of youth policy advisory mission delegation for their high level of professionalism, all their hard work and extremely useful report.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

After completing three-year reform, we are aiming to get ecosystem of well-performing youth sector and quality and institutionalized youth work, which will enable the youth to fully realize their potential and be actively involved in all areas of public life.

Thank you for your attention!