

30 March 2017, Kyiv

**Greetings of the Steering Committee of the Ukrainian National Platform
of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum
on coming into force of the visa-free regime for Georgia**

The Steering Committee of the Ukrainian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (UNP EaP CSF) congratulates the fraternal Georgian people and, in particular, our colleagues from the Georgian National Platform of the EaP CSF with a visa-free regime which has come into force for Georgia these days.

This achievement has become possible thanks to the efficient and synergic efforts of the Georgian authorities that carried out a number of important reforms in due time, and Georgian civil society consistently defending a pro-European position of Georgia.

We are sincerely pleased that Georgia was granted a visa-free regime with the European Union - despite all the obstacles on the way to its introduction. We congratulate the citizens of Georgia and hope that Ukraine will be the next country to gain a visa-free regime with the EU, as well as that this moment will arrive soon.

We express a solidarity with the Georgian people in our common aspiration to bring our countries closer to the European living standards, undertake the necessary reforms and build Europe at home. Also, we highly appreciate the Georgian people's efforts and support in receiving a visa-free regime by Ukraine.

In this context, a visa-free regime is a very important tool providing connectivity with the European Union, an additional opportunity for gaining experience of the European practices, as well as a symbol of the European Union's openness and trust to the countries which share the European values and express their desire to become members of the European community. Cancellation of EU travel visas is a practical tool that enables every citizen to take advantage of the European integration and inspires to move forward in this direction.

At the same time, one should not forget that a visa-free regime is also an additional challenge for the entire society and authorities. It imposes an additional responsibility and requires a diligent and careful work to ensure an effective visa-free regime functioning, as well as to reduce the risks associated with its usage. The government and society still need to focus on extensive public-awareness efforts, explanation of legal and procedural peculiarities stipulated by the visa-free regime, as well as its technical implementation. We, the representatives of civil society of Ukraine, which looks forward to being granted a visa-free regime with the European Union next after Georgia, should remember about this. We should also participate as widely as possible in the activities aimed to ensure efficient and procedurally correct introducing and functioning of the visa-free regime in Ukraine.