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Appeal by Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum to the Delegations of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) on Discussions on the Removal of Sanctions Affecting the Russian Delegation

The Steering Committee of the Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership (EaP CSF) would like to draw your attention to a possible threat to the fundamental values of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), posed by ongoing work on a report on “proposals relating to the challenge or reconsideration of credentials and representation and participation rights of national delegations, as well as regaining the voting rights of members

and the voting procedures of the Assembly”, announced by PACE Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs on 3 September 2018 in Paris.

The Committee report derives from the case of the Russian delegation to PACE, which refuses to present its credentials to the Assembly, as long as the threat of sanctions for the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the military aggression in Eastern Ukraine impedes the representatives of Russia in the Assembly.

If the guarantees demanded by the Russian delegation were to be satisfied – providing their return to PACE, then this would create a precedent depriving PACE of the means to effectively impose sanctions against delegations in the future.

The Committee is due to discuss this issue on 20 September 2018, and a possible vote by PACE on its conclusions is scheduled for 9 October 2018.

We are deeply concerned that a compromise on this issue could threaten basic values espoused by the Council of Europe and its Parliamentary Assembly, especially as the original cause for imposing sanctions remains in place.

Crimea remains under Russian control and the war in Eastern Ukraine continues – only an end to this situation could give a cause for the threat of these sanctions, which were originally imposed by PACE to be removed.

Thus, we strongly appeal to all members of the PACE Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs Committee not to support any formula, which would guarantee the Russian delegation avoiding sanctions on their return to PACE.

We also call on the members of national delegations to guard against possible moves, which would threaten Council of Europe principles and to reject any resolution by PACE, limiting the role of sanctions against delegations to the Assembly – considering member states’ commitments at the time of joining the Council of Europe.

Members of the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum