



Statement of Georgian civil society:

On transparency in the planning and disbursement of international aid for Georgia

According to official data, during the recent Georgia-Russia conflict (8-12 August 2008), dozens of civilians and servicemen were killed, thousands of houses were damaged and burned, and approximately 158 000 people became homeless. Nine hundred hectares of forests were burned in the Samtskhe-Javakheti and Shida Kartli regions, while there were oil spills in the Black Sea and on the Georgian railway after bombing and explosions.

The international financial institutions (the IFIs, namely the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the European Investment Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Monetary Fund) as well as the EU and the USA, plan to allocate significant sums for Georgia's reconstruction.

According to the preliminary statements of the USA and the EU, these sums will be used for emergency budgetary support, humanitarian aid, and Georgia's economic and infrastructural rehabilitation. In addition, the IFIs plan to allocate different types of credits for structural reforms, the fast eradication of conflict results and mitigation of the impacts for the affected population, as well as municipal and other infrastructure development projects.

These sums would ensure the reduction of the damage resulting from the conflict and support Georgia's further development. However, in order to properly allocate and disburse the funds and ensure proper results, it is important that the process of prioritisation and disbursement of the money is based on the principles of transparency and participation.

Public participation in the decision-making process

It is critical that the affected communities, local authorities, NGOs, expert groups and trade unions are involved in the process of needs assessment and related prioritisation of funds disbursement. They should have a decisive voice in deciding what needs to be done and how this will be accomplished. The major decisions that will have an impact on Georgia's future should be taken with due public participation and with the support of the Georgian people.

The dialogue between donors, government and society is essential to ensure informed decision-making, to gain society's trust for the donor countries/organisations and the government, as well as for effective definition of Georgia's priorities.

As transparent as the process would be during the initial decision-making stage, there need to be more guarantees that the follow up steps will also be transparent and implemented properly.

Access to information

In parallel to the discussion on needs and priorities, discussion also needs to take place on how to monitor the allocated financial support for Georgia. All citizens should have a right to request and receive full, timely and objective information regarding:

- What funds have been allocated by each donor country/organisation to Georgia and how this money will be disbursed
- The terms binding the use of the funds
- How the money will be disbursed (which governmental structures will be involved in the process and the responsibility of each structure)
- What are the mechanisms to ensure the proper allocation and disbursement of funds by the government
- How governments and donors will ensure the accountability mechanisms with regard to the allocation and disbursement of funds towards society.

Compliance with international conventions

It is critical that, during the allocation of their financial aid and investments, the donor countries and organisations comply with the “Paris Declaration on International Aid Effectiveness”, and the UN ECE convention on “Access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to Justice on environmental matters” (the Aarhus convention).

Support for the development of democracy in Georgia

External financial support for Georgia should contribute not only to the eradication of the damage that has been sustained from the recent conflict, but also to longer term goals – the democratic development of Georgia and its further integration into European Institutions.

Georgia will become a strong, independent state only if it is established on and operates in line with the principles of democracy. To achieve that goal it is essential to support a free media, an active non-governmental sector, an efficient system of human rights protection, strong local self governance, and independent legal system, a pluralistic political system, free and fair elections and other necessary democratic institutions.

Any international aid support should be directly related to how the Georgian government implements its obligations to develop a functioning democracy.

We would like to thank all donors for their expressed moral and financial support and hope that these efforts will bring positive results for Georgia, its partner countries and the organisations.

Georgian Young Lawyers' Association

Association Green Alternative

Transparency International - Georgia