Civil Society Strategizing Event
Event Results Summary

August 24-26, 2018

Executive summary

On August 24-26, 2018, within the framework of the Civil Society Organizations Development Program (CSO DePo) implemented with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Eurasia Partnership Foundation (EPF) organized a three-day **CSO Stategizing Event at the New State of Affairs** to discuss the vision of Armenia's strategic development and existing attitudes in this new and unprecedented historical setting created as a result of the Velvet Revolution. **The objectives of the event included:** defining communication and cooperation mechanisms between the civil society and the government, promotion and creation (if missing) of such mechanisms, formulation of innovative ideas, as well as outlining and discussion of the civil society vision and its implementation strategy.

The initial list of participants for the event included over 400 participants such as civil society leaders, intellectuals, independent analysts, ministry representatives, governmental agencies and the media. For maximum efficiency in discussing Armenia's changes in the wake of the Velvet Revolution and emerging opportunities, 120 participants were selected and the open space method was chosen. This method allowed the participants to form a number of thematic groups of their own choosing **on the very first day** and to discuss positive and negative aspects of their selected subject in an informal setting. The participants raised over 30-35 issues building around them 12 thematic groups:

- Trade unions, advocacy
- Education
- Civil Society for human rights - legal system
- Sustainable development and environmental protection
- The media
- Even regional development
- Elections, policies, strategies - the link and communication between the Government, CSOs and political parties
- Women at the new state of affairs
- Governance reform
- Culture
- Development of the civil society
- Global Armenia - foreign relations

The results of all discussions conducted in thematic groups were presented and analyzed at plenary sessions.

On the second day, thematic groups discussed potential schemes and mechanisms to solve the issues raised on the first day and made a number of recommendations.

On the third day, the activities of the first two days were summarized. Some thematic groups either merged or split with the links between the groups becoming more pronounced. Applicable and viable schemes and mechanisms for problem-solving were identified at plenary sessions. The third day was marked by sharing of experience from several officials representing the public sector (Artur Grigoryan, Head of Nature Protection and Subsoil Inspectorate, Artur Vanetsyan, Head of the National Security Service, Nazeni Gharibyan, Deputy Minister of Culture, Sarhat Petrosyan, Head of Real Estate Cadastre Committee and others) who shared their insights on their respective domains.

Overall, CSO representatives, public officials, analysts and the media representatives recognized that prompt solutions to the needs and issues existing in the country can only be given through the cooperation between CSOs and the public sector with jointly driven smooth and unobstructed reforms in the country. CSO representatives expressed their willingness to include the recommendations and schemes discussed at the event into their strategies; in their turn, representatives from the government recognized the urgency of the issues identified by CSOs and their expert potential along with the need to cooperate with CSOs towards solving such issues.

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Introduction

On August 24-26, about 50 leading players from the civil society, intellectuals, independent analysts, along with 30 representatives from the ministries, public agencies and the media (totaling 120 participants) came together in a free creative environment to discuss options for Armenia's vision in the new historical setting. The new historical setting stems from the changes brought about by Armenia's Velvet Revolution with an essential contribution from the civil society toward their successful progress. This three-day event on CSO Startegizing at the New State of Affairs was held within the framework of the Civil Society Organizations Development Program (CSO DePo) implemented with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The event aimed to allow its participants to discuss in thematic groups and at plenary sessions the existing perspectives in Armenia's strategic development vision considering the new historical setting. Not all discussed items are given below or claim to translate into a program as they merely represent ideas born through dialog subject to further discussion.

Group 1. Trade unions, advocacy

The group on trade unions analyzed the situation with the trade unions active in Armenia and their needs by discussing how their activities are regulated under the legislation and by analyzing related strengths and weaknesses to come up with the following set of recommendations:

Positive aspects of the state of affairs
- A simplified legal procedure is put in place for creating trade unions (Law on Trade Unions)
- Legislative framework provides additional opportunities to leverage the activities of trade unions
- Under the law, trade unions are financially independent

Negative aspects
- Lack of financial reports
  a) trade unions do not file financial reports
  b) trade unions are not required to submit financial reports
- Complicated legislative framework (the Labor Code does not protect worker rights)
- The legislation favors the employer
- The requirements for employers are few, while the requirements for employees are numerous
- Low standards for interactions
- Sectoral monopolization (trade unions are few and governed from a single central authority)
- Lack of competition

Recommendations
- Create an alternative trade union for students
- Create an alternative for trade unions
- Review the legislative framework

- Dissolve the Confederation of Trade Unions of Armenia (CTUA)
- Create Labor Inspectorate
- Open a Facebook page and start active discussions
- Establish contacts with leading businesses and jointly promote the creation of trade unions; the business culture advocating the worker rights will serve as an example for the society and will prompt the state to start such businesses
- To create a trade union for drivers (taxi drivers, public transport drivers)

Group 2. Education

Positive aspects of the state of affairs
- Existence of free public general education
- Public expectations to receive quality education
- Achievements in non-formal education e.g. the number of large-scale educational events organized by CSOs and the diversity of their existing methods
- Good development of IT professions
- Presence of innovative educational centers (Tumo, Armat, etc.)
- Presence of higher education institutions in provinces to serve as a basis for decentralization
- Existence and continuity of time-honored educational traditions
- Presence of foreign (American, French and Slavic) higher education institutions in Armenia and the competition they create
- Presence of public and private alternative schools
- Introduction of Bologna process principles and tendencies for joining the Western educational system
- Presence of exchange programs for schools, students and lecturers
- Growing demand from beneficiaries of education thanks to the Revolution
- Presence of legislation and legal instruments on education
- Presence of elementary schools in all communities
- The Armenian language as a resource for the development of education

Negative aspects
- Absence of vision for education
- Low wages for the teaching staff
- Low curricula standards in high schools with reforms needed
- Crisis in some areas of natural and precise sciences
- Mismatch between teaching methods and current requirements
- Lack of planned education
- Low application level for components that promote capacity and skill building
- Low level of civil education
- Inferior demonstration of critical thinking in learning processes
- The content of education serves the interests and the ideology of specific groups
- The problem of politicization, commercialization, militarization and imposed religious worship in education

- Lack of male teachers
- Non-transparent and unfair selection practices for teaching and administrative staff
- Lack of access to education due to financial, physical and elitization tendencies
- Gap between education and labor market
- Vocational education
- Disconnection between different levels of education such as middle and high school, vocational and university education
- Ongoing problems related to academic freedoms and good conduct
- Low level of funding
- Missing links between the school and community
- Weak links between education, science and economy
- Extreme overload of curricula
- Disconnection between learning and testing (examinations, test collections, private tutors)
- Slow progress in aligning higher education institutions with international standards
- Precipitated and unjustified introduction of curricula
- Faulty textbook selection system

Recommendations

Upon analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the Armenia's education system, the working group on education gave the summary of the results reached on the second working day by formulating the following recommendations to the government from the civil society:

Option 1
- To formulate a new vision for education based on a profound analysis/study of the situation
- To take political commitment (public, professional, etc.) to ensure participatory process in formulating such vision
- To ensure sustainable growth of funding for education (to consistently increase the public spending on education both in nominal terms and in proportion to the GDP)
- To form interdisciplinary groups working on the new content for education

Nonetheless, the Deputy Minister of Education and Science joined the group on the second day. After lengthy discussions with the deputy minister, the group decided to choose by voting a negative aspect identified in this area during the previous day and to elaborate recommendations addressing that specific problem. Each group member could choose three items. As a result, *Content and Reform of High School* received the highest number of votes based on which the group elaborated and presented the following recommendations:

Option 2
- To restructure the authority responsible for the content of education (National Institute of Education).
- To set up a wide public/professional platform with the Ministry of Education and Science and using its resources to elaborate a new vision on education (professionals, representatives of the civil society, parents, etc.) that will handle the following:

- Implementation of research
- Content prioritization
- Formulation of vision on education
- To develop interdisciplinary curricula and introduce them in high schools
- To enhance planned learning in high schools
- To enhance the teaching of social sciences and high schools (instilling democratic set of values)
- To integrate high schools into educational complexes in a way the same complex will house primary, middle and high schools
- Introduce optional subjects
- To review the content of education allowing high school graduates to enter higher education institutions (without private tutoring)
- To allow organizations with experience in non-formal learning (specialized NGOs, experts) to offer their services in high schools

Group 3. Civil Society for human rights - legal system

Recommendations in the area of education
- The involvement of the civil society in educational process. This refers to NGOs with experience in human rights to become involved in teaching at schools and in higher education institutions
- Cooperation with theorists (from academic and scholarly environment) and practitioners (civil society, lawyers)
- Teaching human rights as a separate subject in all higher education institutions and departments
- Opportunities for specialization in environmental law, discrimination law, etc. for legal departments

Recommendations to the government
- To merge the National Security Service and Police into a single ministry
- To enable the creation and operation of alternative and independent expert bodies in the Republic of Armenia
- Review the Law on Operative Investigation
- To establish parliamentary supervision over the national security service
- To establish effective remedies as part of internal regulations of the military
- To give to the Minister of Justice the power to designate and dismiss the Head of Department for Penitentiary Facilities
- To establish regulations and standards for granting political asylum
- To create operational units to urgently address emerging problems in penitentiary facilities and the armed forces
- To enhance the work of the human rights department within the armed forces
- To consider the need for a military ombudsman

- To increase the efficiency of the armed forces hotline
- To establish the concept of class action (actio popularis) in the legislation and its application mechanisms

Recommendations to the civil society
- To set up a feedback/quick response network with civil society resources for responding to problems within the armed forces
- To build the capacity of NGOs in legal knowledge and instruments
- To work with police in several dimensions such as hate crimes, family violence, work with minors, etc. To offer to the police trainings on documentation methodology and standards for family violence and hate crimes, etc.
- To work with Human Rights Department of the Ministry of Defense, to update the Public Council under the Ministry of Justice
- To organize for interested NGO representatives meetings with Mr. David Tonoyan to discuss specific proposals on improvements in human rights
- To establish in regional centers and towns public councils within the police
- To make the National strategy of human rights more realistic
- To request the broadcasting on Public Television of the film Armenia's Lost Spring by Tigran Paskevichyan on the events of March 1, 2008.

Group 4. Sustainable development and environmental protection

Positive aspects of the state of affairs
- Armenia's biodiversity
- Geographic position
- Available freshwater resources
- Natural resources
- Develop legislation
- Environmental NGOs, existing remedies to protect public interest before courts of law
- Potential for developing ecotourism
- Training of professionals, vocational education
- Potential for generation of energy from alternative sources

Negative aspects
- The problem of small-capacity hydroelectric power stations, water pollution
- Legislative gaps and corruption
- Low level of public consciousness
- Inefficient use of natural resources and corruption
- Lack of waste removal and waste disposal
- Climatic change, greenhouse gases
- Risks for the lake Sevan
- Gaps in education system

- Lack of public service announcements from relevant agencies
- Poor management of land resources
- Poor management of water resources

Recommendations
- Review and amendment of the Water Code
- Review of the Law on the Lake Sevan
- Efficient use and reduction of natural resources in economy
- Elaboration of waste disposal strategy
- Re-cultivation of tailings dams
- Review of tax legislation on the use of natural resources
- Regulation of transport, namely public transportation
- Development and implementation of a comprehensive strategic plan for the lake Sevan
- Environmental education and training from early age and training of profile specialists
- Use of media platforms for raising public awareness
- Engagement of CSOs in all processes

Group 5. Media

To describe the work of the first day (August 24, 2018), the media landscape was divided into two parts:
1. Institutional media (television, radio, the press and related websites)
2. Non-institutional media (social networks, blogs, etc.)

1. Institutional media

Positive aspects of the state of affairs
- Certain level of freedom of speech
- Corporate responsibility – to a certain degree
- Diversity of opinions and interest groups served
- Certain degree of professionalism
- Presence of legislative regulations

Negative aspects
- Dependence on diverse funding sources and serving their interests
- Costliness (especially for television and radio)

2. Non-institutional media

Positive aspects of the state of affairs
- Prompt dissemination of information and response

- Mass/participatory platform
- Interactivity
- Diversity and accessibility of tools
- Gathering of first-hand information
- Enhancing the freedom of speech
- Accessible tool for self-expression
- Overcoming limitations of time and distance
- Close social interaction and self-organization
- Access to archives

Negative aspects
- Wide dissemination and high effectiveness in spreading manipulations and false reports due to speed (untimeliness effect and distortion)
- Lacking quality of information and absence of liability standards
- Hate speech and intolerance
- Social division and polarization of opinions
- Ousting of the second component from the chain of stimuli – interpretation – reaction and superficial comprehension
- Violation of privacy
- Violation of copyright
- Risks for personal and informational security of minors
- Non-formalization of the media as a chance of reckless professional practices

Recommendations (day one)
- Enhancing media literacy
    - Promoting critical thinking in education system
    - Training of journalists
    - Creation and circulation of training materials
    - Organization of workshops for the civil society
- Promoting mechanisms for verifying and double-checking information
- Creation of expert groups to reveal false reports
    - Ensuring the financial transparency of the media
    - Diversification of the funding sources for the media
    - Donations
    - Subscriptions
- Public funding of the media or specific subjects
- Creating and supporting poles to set off the yellow press
- Fostering competitive framework for budget funding
- Expanding the powers of the supervising body
- Profile specialization of journalists
- Thematic readiness for journalists
- Publicizing of successful cases won against libel and misinformation
- Public dissemination of netiquette

- Training of adults on web protection of minors
- Creation of filters and notifications for information security of minors

(Day two)
- The development of media literacy strategy by a government-established body or by an existing consolidation authority to include (but not limited to) the following problems:
  - engagement of NGOs, educational entities and other interested parties
  - media literacy
  - critical thinking
  - discussion skills
  - netiquette
- Media security of minors (protection of personal data (for instance, the incident related to the humor talent show in one of the summer camps) and other principles), promotion/circulation of teaching materials and their communication to relevant parties such as:
  - general education schools: through the integration of above materials within a separate subject or into all subjects;
  - journalist community: through workshops and trainings;
  - public at large: through circulation by the news media;
  - parents: through parent-related structures as well as **ensuring** 5th item through creation and operation of relevant mechanisms.

- Reform of the Law on Digitization. Reviewing of the **complicated and highly investment-intensive** terms for creating a private digital broadcasting network (Multiplex) as creation of a private Multiplex fails to generate interest as no one enters the call for tenders issued as early as 3 years ago; over 10 regional local TV companies are left out of the digitization process as they continue to operate in analog mode risking to lose their audience and be shut down.
- Reforms in the Law on the Public Television and Radio Company allowing to achieve:
  - institution of a board
  - efficient management style and structure
  - increased content quality and prioritization
  - greater efficiency, transparency and accountability in public involvement mechanisms

It is also proposed to create:
- The institute of a public ombudsman, a **body or a coalition**, that will give regular **alternative reports** on the activities of the Public Television and Radio Company and its compliance with the above items to increase the reliable and impartial control of its activities.
- Different news media outlets will compete through tenders for public funds previously allocated to the Public Television and Radio Company for the production of subject-specific programs/materials and the winning outlet will be offered a chance to produce such programs with public funding and to release them through the Public Television and Radio Company. To a certain degree, this will allow for enhanced efficiency in public spending and a better quality of the produced materials.

- Ensuring transparency of the real media owners and financial sources. As there are numerous ways to conceal the real ownership, the group suggests using the beneficial ownership roadmap from Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). (https://eiti.org/sites/default/files/documents/bo_roadmap_draft_arm_0.pdf):
- Proactive activities of the agencies. To prevent media manipulations and false reports, the group recommends assessing the operational efficiency of activities by public relations units within agencies and taking action to enhance the quality of their work (e.g. the group refers to manipulations that spread mass panic such as the introduction of Gardasil vaccine, the passing of the so-called "Gender" bill and other manipulations by the media).

Group 6. Comprehensive regional development

The group discussed the following issues: uneven distribution of resources between urban and rural communities, downplaying of rural areas as the country's essential structure, controversial practices of nepotism and conflict of interest and all decision-making levels and its various demonstrations that leads to: deficient professional resources in regional and rural communities, lack of management and other essential skills in civil servants; concentration of resources or provision of subsidized resources mainly through a network of relatives and friends, lack of liability and accountability as well as absence of confidence, trust and motivation to exercise one's rights, cause change or start innovation and community members. Another failing value problem is related to the unexercised right of the people in rural areas to enjoy decent living conditions.

Positive aspects of the state of affairs
- Diversity of community resources
- Solid social capital
- Existence of assets: land, animals, food sources – homesteads, land parcels, etc.
- Inexpensive labor
- Fellow countrymen of the Diaspora
- Untapped potential and/or unexplored opportunities in communities
- Internet access
- Diversity of local traditions

Negative aspects
- Unfair leveling
    - Inefficiency of regional public authorities
    - Bloated regional administration staff
    - Missing skills in staff members
    - Weak link with the regional administrations for problem-solving e.g. no link between regional administration centers and communities, between the communities or subregional administration centers or between the community and the city of Yerevan
- Lack or weak CSOs in some communities

- Unexplored and/or untapped community resources: lands, business and tourism potential, human resources, etc.
- Inefficiency in allocating subsidies (exaggerated/overstated needs)
- Established practices of nepotism and conflict of interest in decision-making
- Missing or poor professional skills in staff members of regional administration bodies and local governments
- Intercommunity and intracommunity communications
    - Deficient transport routes
    - Inadequate organization of existing transport routes, arbitrariness, missing or bad flight schedules, box offices and stations
    - Either missing or poor roads that complicate the trade in agricultural products and working contacts with neighboring communities, etc.
- Standardized or faulty strategies developed by local governments
    - Lack of creative approaches
    - Development of uncompetitive strategies
    - Strategies are imitated from other communities
    - Lack of art-related and entrepreneurial programs in strategies
- Rather than being aimed at development the deficient local taxation policy solely serves as means of subsistence
- Myths about rural life
- Lack of intercommunity cooperation, joint problem-solving, and joint program implementation, etc.
- Lack of diversification in tax policy
- Indifference of political parties toward rural communities simply viewing them as electoral resources to tap through a personal network
- Uneven poverty levels across the country
- Problems arising out of community consolidation
- Uncertain future of the consolidation program
- Poor websites of local governments, non-targeted use, lack of accountability
- Private interests permeating into community development programs
- Feelings of despondency and powerlessness in people
- Low level/quality of public services including in education, healthcare, etc.
- Disproportionate funding and investments with lack of coordination
- Broken window syndrome i.e. unsolved problems further aggravate
- Demographic problems: aged and aging population, outflow of the youth
- Low capacity and corruption of local governments
- Lack of exemplary publicizing especially in community development affairs
- Lacking or missing strict regulations on conflict of interest for officials of local governments
- Lack of resources and social workers for problem-solving in communal social protection

Recommendations
- To abolish excessive administrative levels and positions after relevant study
- Radical changes in the leveling formula: establishing problem hierarchy, zoning and bonus system

- To increase the proportion of funding for rural communities
- Extended authorities and funding for local governments
- Discussions with local governments for introduction of transport infrastructure
- Creation of circulation funds (proposal by Khazer NGO)
- To eliminate the established practices of favoritism (nepotism) in communities and regions
- Capacity building for business approaches and program management
- Moving some public authorities to neighboring regions (e.g. authorities that do not need to maintain an operational link with the central executive structures)
- Establishing new administration methods for intercommunal authorities
- Strict regulation of conflict of interest Introducing a property and income declaration procedure for officials of local governments
- Promotion of consolidated land use, upgrade of technical equipment, cultivation of new plants
- Tax/community benefits for young people (specialists)
- Introduction of cultural community-based entrepreneurship (based on the creative industries model)
- Improved territorial organization

Problem solving options (urgent, viable, important)
- Reduce the staff of regional administrations
- Raising the issue, discussions, research
- Governmental decree
- Review of job (position) descriptions (CSOs can be helpful here)
- Delegation of other functions from the communities to regional and central authorities
- Review of powers
- Review the leveling formula: while the formula reflects the fund allocations in line with tax inputs to the state budget of the same city, it leads to a greater degradation of rural areas as low/poor tax generation structures put them into discrimination zones and provoke a great outflow from rural areas to the cities.
- Professional discussions – opportunities and risks (CSOs can be helpful here)
- Initiating the amendment of the law
- Introduction of bonuses according to strategic zoning
- Increased public interest
- Extended powers for local governments

- Improved infrastructure for communal communications
- Main components: means of transport and roads
- Market analysis
- Organization of inter-community competitions by regional administrations
- Establishing strict implementation control for community municipalities
- Establishing public supervision over the holding of the competition
- Co-founding plans in communal budgets to ensure profitability
- Mobilization of targeted subsidies and subventions
- Fiscal control

- Capacity building (CSOs can do this) for:
- Sectoral legislation for local governments
- Anticorruption/elimination of conflict of interest
- Governance
- Program management
    - Business thinking

- Entrepreneurship development at local level
    - (CSOs can be helpful as liaisons)
    - Entrepreneurship development at local level including the development of creative industries
    - Establishing tax, loan and social benefits
    - Creating mortgage loan benefits for regions

- Reinforcing social protection and communities (specialized CSOs can be helpful as liaisons)
    - Budget decentralization: transfer of the budget from ministries to communities
    - Mapping of social vulnerabilities in communities, formulation of needs
    - Creation of various social services

Group 7. Elections, policies, strategies - link and communication between government, CSOs and political parties

Positive aspects
- Political parties represent a free resource (political landscape is not dense, there are great opportunities for new political parties and party activism)
- The current situation is very favorable (there are no obstacles for party activities with social demand in place)
- Under these circumstances, an opportunity to hold free and fair elections (is created)
- (There is) recognition of the fact that the Armenian democracy has no future without political parties
- Involvement of people in governance can be achieved through political parties

Negative aspects
- Lack of coordinated contacts between NGOs and the government
- NGOs are mainly of non-political nature
- The classic model for political parties has never been implemented in Armenia
- Political parties lack ideology. Notwithstanding, the main problem is the absence of elections rather than missing ideologies. (In such absence, political parties believe that they do not need ideologies as there is no chance of gaining or partaking in power through elections)
- Critical thinking is not shaped due to the existing model of education

- Lack of institutions for strategy development, projections or prevention
- Government is the only policy maker today
- NGOs used to receive the bulk of their funding from external sources that not always were aimed at identifying and solving their local problems
- The problem of funding political parties (unsolved).

Recommendations
- To create new communication models – a platform for interactions between NGOs, political parties and the government; to engage the media and a wide array of political parties within the platform for professional discussions
- To hold joint workshops on regular basis (NGOs-political parties-government) and to make them sectoral: on economy, culture, etc.
- Reformulation of the public counsel
- To enable a link for NGOs and the government through a public counsel comprised of the civil society representatives
- For strategy development: (recommendation is currently formulated) in the form of a public directive offered to the NGOs offering funding solutions for NGOs that will allow them to become independent on a competitive basis
- Working with professional groups (joint action by government and political parties) will be helpful in formulating/creating efficient strategies
- Political parties must represent (global, national) general picture (i.e. they should not be "specialized" along similar lines "you are patriots and we are environmentalists").
- Action (by the government) targeting professional groups and individuals is required
- Establishment of certain standards for political parties (e.g. program-based approach, universal representation, presence and enforcement of internal regulations).

Group 8. Women at the new state of affairs

Positive aspects
- Public debate is underway (on unequal rights for women)
- Gender class (in school curricula)
- Presence of socially accomplished women as a class
- Active role of women in the revolution
- Positive female politicians (have emerged)
- Change of the political elite (enabling women to become engaged in the emerging elite)
- Anti-corruption and anti-authoritarian tendency (the practices of the new authorities are positive because women have fewer opportunities and tendencies for progress in corrupt and violent environments and have better opportunities in the climate of lawfulness and solidarity)
- Inspirational and anti-stereotype rhetoric (as a result of the Revolution)

- Quotas (it is planned to ensure a minimum involvement of women in decision-making bodies at 30%; negotiations are underway to increase this quota in the future)
- Laws (the legislation and the Constitution reinforce the equality standard for women)

Negative aspects
- Quotas are few and unsystemic (quotas do not ensure equal gender representation and do not apply to all decision-making authorities)
- Maintenance of discriminatory thinking (in the society)
- Areas closed for women (security forces, the military, construction, transport and diplomatic work are relatively lucrative occupations that ensure for their practitioners a certain social status)
- Areas primarily reserved for women (occupations such as childcare, household work, teaching to young children and adolescents, secretarial work are viewed as "female", are relatively poorly remunerated and give their practitioners a low status)
- The media advocate discrimination (meaning TV shows and TV programs featuring psychologists, clergymen and doctors that frequently directly advocate discrimination allegedly from a professional perspective)
- Lack of engagement for women at the highest educational level (heads of higher educational institutions, senior faculty members, postgraduate students)
- Uneven lifestyle distribution
- Uneven wages
- Discriminatory treatment by employers
- Poor anti-discrimination legislation (the legislation fails to define discrimination with no specific counteraction mechanisms)

Recommendations
- Progressive increase of quotas by the government e.g. with each successive election
- Public awareness raising for women by the civil society, cooperation with youth wings of political parties (towards engagement of women and enhancement of their role), capacity building for female politicians
- Enactment of a specific Law on Elimination of Discrimination, review of the Law on Gender Equality (by adding therein safeguarding provisions), human rights work by NGOs and work towards better public awareness raising
- To develop (educational) strategy to cover state promotional activities for public service announcements
- Review of the laws on the media and television (for elimination of discrimination) to raise social problems (related to equal rights)
- CSOs will conduct monitoring activities related to gender discrimination
- The state is to conduct promotional proactive policies to enhance the role of women in academia i.e. fellowships, positions reserved for women
- Review of textbooks by CSOs from the gender perspective
- Training for teachers and professors (for appropriate coverage of gender-related matters)
- The state is to conduct a proactive policy to alleviate the tax burden for (employers) hiring women above 40

Group 9. Governance reforms

Positive aspects
- Commitment of the state leadership to conduct corruption free governance
- Staffing changes occur (positive and negative aspects were identified)
- The government is open to proposals and partnerships (positive and negative aspects were identified)
- The importance of both online and offline discussion platforms is acknowledged
- Willingness of international organizations to provide assistance (public enthusiasm to become constructively involved in state building).

Negative aspects
- (Governance at national level) is not participatory
- National potential is not used efficiently
- Common stereotypes
- A crisis in governance system is underway (at national, regional and local levels)
- Centralization of governance (the tradition of governance by a single center/person)
- Poor public consciousness
- Absence (or lack) of motivational mechanisms
- Lacking regulation on specific mechanisms for staffing purposes
- Lacking governance efficiency
- Arbitrary enforcement of laws
- Lack of (more or less concrete) vision
- Lack of service delegation mechanisms
- Missing (poor) public monitoring arrangements
- Need to develop research-based policy (policies)
- Inefficient communication between the government and civil society organizations (lack of filtering links)
- Non-transparent activities and lack of information
- Low remuneration of civil/public servants, poor hiring process
- Bloated administrative staff
- Coinciding functions and overlapping (of various institutions)
- Review and elimination of extra-budgetary ministry accounts, the need to introduce bonus system in civil service to replace extra-budgetary accounts and fine-tuning of governance mechanisms
- Inefficient distribution of supervisory functions at national, regional and local levels

Recommendations
- Enhancing the efficiency of interagency cooperation at different levels
- Review of governmental structure including more specific legal regulation of the role played by local governments, ascertaining the interactions between state, regional authorities and local governments in terms of legal regulation and legislative enforcement practices
- Efficient management of public property

- At a minimum, targeting and distribution of extra-budgetary funds, publicity and transparency requirement, if the complete elimination of fund distribution through extra budgetary accounts proves impossible
- Delegation of some services and functions to the civil society or private sector organizations in compliance with legislative mechanisms
- Restructuring of certain state non-commercial organizations and project implementation units with smooth transfer of their functions based on established timeframes and assessment results
- Development and introduction of special remuneration mechanisms for public/civil servants based on standards of proactivity and efficiency
- To develop filtering and coordinating systems to process the flow of proposals from the civil society (e.g. by establishing dedicated headquarters or by reinforcing the role of the public councils adjunct to the minister and assigning this function to them) and to give them financial support (by offering them premises and property)
- Developing and providing online access to sample application forms for citizens, the civil society and representative of other structures
- Establishing good practices for public and communal practices by introducing them in education system from elementary level (kindergarten-school)
- Submission of regular public reports by public authorities

Group 10. Culture

Positive aspects
- Culture-based identity
    - Reputable status of educated persons
- World class teams and individuals
- International or global nature of the Armenian culture
- Established practices of annual cultural events (Golden Apricot)
    - Participation in international cultural events (individuals, delegations)
- Modern art potential (established institutions)
- New creative grants from the Ministry of Culture (development in progress)

Negative aspects
- Vulnerability of cultural figures, activities at risk
- Corruption: political (ideological) and financial (closed tenders)
- Management inertia: absence of modern mechanisms, no legal equality between NGOs dealing with culture
- Concentration of cultural hotspots in Yerevan
- Cultural hotspots not accessible for persons with disabilities
- Nationalization of culture
- Lack of policy on culture, gaps in legislative framework, poor taxation policy
- Stereotyping in the activities of cultural figures

- Inefficiency of art colleges due to obsolete methods and lack of modern specialists
- Deterioration of cultural facilities with no creative spaces
- Inefficiency of transparency and public relations
- Bureaucratic approach

Recommendations
- To introduce an insurance mechanism aligned with the area of culture (cooperate with international cultural associations)
- Use of cutting-edge means of communication
- De-politicizing of culture
- Transparent competitive system
- Innovative management, introduction of up-to-date mechanisms in the area of culture
- Elimination of monopolies in culture (associations, festivals, NGOs)
- Development of communal cultural centers, engagement of cultural figures
- Governance decentralization
- Prioritization action plan to secure accessibility
- Promotion of global concern, encouragement of international projects
- Development of a concept paper on culture, its presentation to the public at large
- Liberalization of the area of culture (ideological, economic)
- Drastic liberalization of art colleges
- Modernization of cultural centers
- Creation of free laboratories
- Creation of up-to-date and efficient methods for transparency and public relations
- The state must be the number one manager

Group 11. Development of the civil society

Positive aspects
- Thanks to the efforts by CSOs and donors, we have a mostly favorable Law on Non-Governmental Organizations
- Current authorities have shown political will to view CSOs as their partners in country's democratization and problem-solving

Negative aspects
- The only document on cooperation between CSOs and the government, the Protocol Governmental Decree No. 40-42 dated September 25, 2014 by the Government of the Republic of Armenia on Approval of the Concept Paper and Event Schedule on Institutional and Legislative Reforms for the Development of Civil Society Organizations, is obsolete and outdated; most of activities set forth therein are not completed with their implementation dates expired
- The current legislation that regulates the activities of NGOs is problematic:
  - The legal provisions set forth in the Law on Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Armenia leads to diverging interpretations on protecting the interests of NGO

members and beneficiaries before courts of law and are abused in all courts of law of the Republic of Armenia to the detriment of its citizens and NGOs

- Under the Law on Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Armenia, the capacity of NGOs to protect public interests before courts of law is limited to environmental protection. Incidentally, the implementation of this standard is also complicated under the law due to a multitude of bureaucratic regulations frequently abused by judicial authorities

- The circulated draft of the Law on Voluntary Work of the Republic of Armenia contains numerous provisions and inappropriate control regulations limiting the free activities of NGOs and volunteers

- For the most part, public governance authorities and local governments demonstrate contemptuous attitude toward CSOs
    - The activities of public councils within ministries are mostly formal
    - For the most part, applications and administrative complaints filed by CSOs fail to receive an adequate response and are given dismissive answers
    - The online e-draft tool does not work properly
    - Public administration bodies and local governments are not proactive in terms of engaging NGOs interested in public debate
    - Public administration bodies and local governments do not view CSOs as quality partners
    - Public councils are completely inefficient: rather than serving as constructive and real opponents to the former authorities they became the public endorser for their traitorous policy throughout its activities, this structure has never voiced the problems of the society and has never protected its interests as established under the law to such effect.

- CSOs do not take part in planning and supervision of loan and grant programs offered to public administration bodies and local governments by donors

- A large part of NGOs needs to build its capacities, develop internal resources and the level of their financial stability

Recommendations

- To develop a new strategy for cooperation between CSOs and the state within the framework of the goals and commitments of the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement

- To introduce amendments and changes in the Law on Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Armenia to ascertain, reinforce and apply in practice the right of the non-governmental organizations to protect the interests of their members, beneficiaries and the public at large before courts of law

- To drastically improve the draft Law on Volunteer Work based on the results of the past wide public debate

- Profound and cardinal changes in the Governmental Decree on Public Councils adjunct to ministers to enhance their role and impact on the ongoing sectoral policy

- Establishing appropriate and mandatory administrative procedures for applications and administrative complaints filed to the public administration bodies and local governments by NGOs in the Law on Fundamentals of Administrative Action and Administrative

Proceedings of the Republic of Armenia, legislation on local governments, and governmental decrees of the Republic of Armenia on Charters of Public Administration Bodies
- Improved management of the e-draft online tool in terms of examination time frames, feedback, etc.
- Creation of a database with contact details of sectoral stakeholders and its regular use for public debates and for the establishment and maintenance of partnerships with CSOs
- To include in the state budget a special public program for the cooperation between the state and CSOs e.g. to implement NGO capacity building, monitoring and other partnership programs
- To envisage the delegation by the state of a part of its powers to CSOs on a competitive basis
- Two engage NGOs in the monitoring and supervision of the deliverables and non-financial indicators for programs covered in the state budget
- To review the Law on Public Council of the Republic of Armenia in line with the spirit of the time
- To establish regulations for the portfolio composition of programs to be implemented with loan and grant facilities provided by donors in order to ensure the involvement of CSOs in their monitoring and supervision
- Specialized institutionalization of NGO management by introducing a bachelor or master degree program in one of the higher education institutions of the Republic of Armenia
- A tool to enhance the image and financial sustainability of NGOs – the introduction of 1% tax and its application mechanisms in the Republic of Armenia

Group 12. Networked State

(the group was formed by the merging of Global Armenia and Foreign Relations groups)

Positive aspects
- A new state of affairs reached in the wake of the Revolution allows for systemic changes in any area
- The revolutionary situation led to a "creative adventurism" that allows to initiate programs and activities that not only were impossible to implement but were hardly conceivable in the past
- Armenia features certain successful global initiatives: TUMO, Aurora
- The new state of affairs creates a favorable environment for civil education
- Thanks to the type and quality of its Revolution, Armenia garners global attention
- The new state of affairs created opportunities to review the set of values and eliminate fragmentation
- The civil society played an important role in the revolutionary processes and can do so in the post-revolutionary reality.

Negative aspects
- The Armenian society still has quite an obsolete picture of global actors and relations

- The discrepancies between this description and the ongoing processes along with lacking knowledge and information leads to stereotypical and mythical phobias that prevent adequate decision-making
- Overall, the civil society lacks knowledge and expertise for efficient and active involvement in foreign relations
- Over the past 30 years of Armenian history, certain fragmentation of the set of values can be observed frequently hindering the creation of sustainable social units
- Over the past decade, the prevailing public perceptions about the civil society were distorted by inefficient communication and anti-propaganda

Recommendations
- The Revolution led to a greater precision in the set of values underlying the foreign relations. This means:
    - Sovereignty
    - Human-based approach
    - The priorities in foreign relations hinge on domestic priorities
    - The possibility for an ambitious foreign policy allowing Armenia to be a contributor rather than a constant petitioner
    - A new description or a description of the 'new world' is needed to define Armenia's place, opportunities and role in the modern world
    - Study visits and creation of new contacts are some of the activities required to make such description possible
    - The reference is mainly made to the analysis and discussion of global key processes and development trends. The reference is mainly made to the analysis and discussion of global key processes and development trends
    - This set of descriptions also includes a search for new program opportunities enabling cognitive capacities through joint activities
    - Armenian communities represent important information channels and can play an essential role in drafting such descriptions
- The description process naturally prompts activities that aim to benefit from identified opportunities and to integrate into the world to the greatest extent possible. This process is viewed as project activities and includes:
    - Enhancing of available global projects
    - Globalization of existing projects
    - Localization of globally available projects in Armenia
    - Creation of new global projects
- Also, dismantling of phobias and formulation of ambitions is viewed as an essential activity for efficient work on Armenia's foreign policy
    - To transition from an isolated population of 3 million to a global society of 10 million
    - All-Armenian social networks (human rights protection, observation, anti-corruption, etc.)
    - "Detraditionalization" of the diaspora structures
    - Implementation of social/humanitarian work in partner countries

- Formulating a future vision of the country and using it as a material for foreign policy purposes

From the perspective of Global Armenia, Armenians can be viewed as a network with Armenia being an essential link as a "home base" or a maximum comfort zone. In other words, any member of the network must experience a maximum security, comfort and freedom in Armenia. Apart from having a center, Global Armenia network requires figuratively speaking a "text" that will represent content built on unifying and common values and on visions that will be circulated through the network and will serve all of its links. The importance of the text is that it can be replicated on any link level. From this perspective, it is possible to formulate the following positive aspects:

- A fragmented text is available in the wake of the revolution with its components build on set of essential values such as law, solidarity, justice, etc.
- The current state of affairs allows to formulate and launch the Armenian globalization scenario

Negative aspects
- Traditionally, some sort of opposition is formulated between Armenia and the Diaspora, while these components are not comparable/opposable
- Over the years, vertical contacts were reinforced for the benefit of horizontal contacts

What needs to be done?
- To intensify the formulation and distribution of texts essential for the network. This should include information, messages on common values and goals allowing feedback and formulating a potential to-do list.
- Beside formulation, such texts must be adapted to contexts at different network links.
  - The project to launch the first Armenian satellite must be initiated and implemented
  - The existence of texts and the satellite will allow to disseminate as promptly as possible essential text and symbols about the network and the concept
- To set up branches of the Yerevan State University in major centers. The presence of different structures of the same unit will allow the circulation of essential content according to the principle of communicating vessels
- It is necessary to create subnetworks with profile specialization e.g. Armenian club of irrational mathematicians
- It is necessary to intensify translation activities from and into Armenian
- It is necessary to set up new language learning methods using IT capacities allowing to teach Armenian using Latin or Cyrillic script, to organize reading and communication sessions

Projects
1. **<u>Launch of the first Armenian satellite</u>**

Transforming into text the values (law and solidarity, sovereignty, human-based approach, Armenia's competitive edge) and move it into telecommunications domain through broadcasting.
Target (implementer): the government
Producer (or content): CSOs (Bun TV, Civilnet, etc.)
2. Existing globalized projects: Tumo, Aurora, Golden Apricot, UWCD
3. Networks

Observer
- Observer/"Nation-Observer"
  - Citizen of observer - Transparency International + Restart - "Akanates"
- "Nation – human rights defender"
  - Right of minorities - Armenian Helsinki organizations
    Implementers: AURORA, IDEA
- Initiative by System of a Down rock group to hold regular rock festivals in Armenia to replicate essential values.
  - Implementers: Ministry of Culture, human rights defender, civil society
- Virtual University
  - Implementers: educational NGOs, Yerevan State University, BUN, Restart

To use the following mechanism: importing successful projects, making them succeed in Armenia, exporting them later to the network and further disseminating them globally (e.g. Restart-globalization)
4. "Nation-habitat"
- Implementation of programs in line with the principles of habitat with involvement of various network units

Other proposals formulated in plenary discussions

To hold additional discussions in the following areas:

- Cooperation between Armenian and foreign CSOs within the framework of EU-Armenia partnership. Cooperation between the state and CSOs as well as cooperation between Armenian and CSOs are among important goals of the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement and are part of our commitments.

- Healthcare: a discussion to be held on the subject with specialized CSOs of relevant profile.

- Economy: a special separate discussion on problems from area must be held as soon as possible using this format.

- Social domain: in particular, a few minor issues exclusively relating to persons with disabilities were partially raised. A special separate discussion on other problems from this area must be held using this format.

- Education: contacts with the military service, contact coordination in the context of even development of issues related to science and defense.

- The work of all groups features elements of **governance reforms** that call for a separate discussion.

- Governmental agencies: working with CSOs from the first stages of policy and strategy development for improved viability and manageability. To apply short-term, mid-term and long-term strategy development method.

- Active engagement of CSOs in public structures for improved governance, work ethics, leadership, planned thinking, business approaches expectations, as well as for a maximum mitigation of numerous conflicts caused by varying set of values and generation-specific work style, methods and their consequences.

Cooperation between the civil society and the public sector
- Establishing a CSO commission under the regional inspectorates
- The National Security Service is prepared to cooperate with citizens within permissible limits e.g. meetings can be arranged using the same format (every 6 months)
- A digitization of the National Security Service archives is underway, following which CSOs will be given a chance to use a part of it
- The role of CSOs is essential in shaping the public opinion concerning the National Security Service
- CSOs can undertake educational processes in the following directions:
    - Extreme spreading of drugs; protection of national identity; patriotism
- **Political parties**
    - To create a platform for development of a de-individualization policy for the media representatives and political parties
    - To organize theme discussions with journalists to solve the issue of lacking ideology
    - A political party must have universal and well-defined views on all domains
    - CSOs will suggest questions that will be forwarded to the government through political parties
    - Political parties must not represent groups built around a person but must serve as open platforms assembled around certain problems
    - The issue of **funding** for political parties must be discussed: where this funding must come from – government or individuals?
    - The issue of funding for political parties may be solved by providing competitive grants

General observations
    - This is the first similar event that did not formulate the need to have a group on security and corruption while the group on elections never mentioned the elections. On the one hand, it demonstrates that the former anxiety and permanent tensions abated due to

increased confidence, on the other hand, it demonstrates that there is a risk of reduced control, which is not so good.
- The willingness to communicate and cooperate is clearly discernible especially from the representatives of the government.
- The statements by the representatives of the ministries demonstrated that in some cases the plans of the new authorities were more serious, conceptualized and profound than could be presumed; however, they were not well communicated to the public (Artur Grigoryan, Hovhvannes Hovhannisyan, Sarhat Petrosyan).
- The authorities need specific problem-solving models and specialists. Since specialists are not always willing to work in the public sector, it is necessary to develop other engagement mechanisms.
- Initiation of sectoral discussions by the civil society can be one of the subsequent steps following this event.
- Interagency contacts are not yet in their prime state and CSOs can be helpful in this regard.
- E-government tools become trendy in a new way, as they are now used to promptly solve or expose domestic problems rather than to share externally imposed information.
- Three cooperation opportunities were mapped during a single event:
    - Capacity building task for the municipality of Goris
    - Application of the social entrepreneurship model with the migration service conceived for Gyumri Infotun through CELoG.
    - To create a pilot tool with Subsoil Inspectorate in order to facilitate and institutionalize the engagement of CSOs.

- End –

Wednesday, October 10, 2018