



GYLA Responds to the Opening of Spring Session of the Parliament of Georgia

Today, at the opening of the spring session of the Parliament of Georgia, we would like to remind to the legislative authorities and other stakeholders about procedural gaps that emerged during the last session of the parliament. It is important that future activities of the parliament are in full conformity with the regulations. Further, legislation must provide for high standards for openness of the parliament and for public engagement in the activities of the parliament.

Initially the new parliament facilitated openness of the legislative process: information about time and agenda of committee meetings was published in a timely manner; however, at the end of the Autumn Session and during extraordinary session of the parliament, requirements of transparency as stipulated by the regulations of the parliament were mostly violated while the process of legal drafting was soaring. Further, violation of the transparency standard encouraged hasty process of the lawmaking, which was mostly the case at the end of the session, promoting in its turn lawmaking without public engagement. Submission of legislative proposals to the parliament is certainly not our end goal; rather, we expect that positions and opinion of GYLA and civil society in general will be paid due attention and utilized to improve legal drafts by the parliament. Public also has the right to hear arguments for not upholding these opinions.

[In its December 20, 2012 statement GYLA criticized the foregoing practice](#), saying that information about committee meetings was not made publicly available within prescribed term and moreover, there were instances when the information was

published as late as several hours/dozens of minutes before the meeting. Further, in individual cases information about committee session and its agenda was not made publicly available even when the meeting had already started.

During the foregoing period, the parliament of Georgia hastily considered and adopted important new regulations, within the period of one week, which is certainly very little time for due consideration of the draft and facilitating public engagement. For example, it took the parliament only seven days to amend the law of Georgia on Higher Education; new regulations in the Criminal Procedure Code were adopted at the similar rapid pace.

On the opening of its spring session, we would like to call on the parliament of Georgia to pay particular attention to observance of procedures for consideration of legal drafts and requirements of openness particularly in view of the fact that applicable norms of the Regulations are flawed and need to be revised.

Further, we call on the parliament to turn to consideration of legal drafts in a hasty manner only where necessary and expedient, neither of which was the case in foregoing instances. Legislative authorities must consider that by adoption of a legal draft at a rapid pace, sacrifices the most important advantage of adopting a law with the engagement of public, all stakeholders and by hearing their opinions, which certainly requires provision of necessary time and space. It is particularly important in light of the fact that during its spring session the parliament plans to consider and adopt a number of important legal drafts.