



The Ruling Party's Decision about the Election System is Unacceptable

On June 19, the ruling party unveiled its decision to keep the mixed election system for the 2020 parliamentary elections and to replace it with a fully proportional election system for the 2024 elections. In addition, according to representatives of the majority, the threshold for the 2020 elections will be reduced to 3% as a one-time initiative, while the decision about the abolishment of party blocks (electoral coalitions) will remain intact.

We must unequivocally underline that the decision of the Georgian Dream is completely unacceptable and unreasonable.

Although we have vocally criticized the rule about giving unallocated mandates to the winning party and abolishment of party blocks while maintaining the 5% threshold, as

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introduced by the package of the Constitutional amendments, we welcomed the move to the proportional election system. The Venice Commission shares this opinion and believes that introduction of the proportional election system is a positive step.

After four months of deliberations within the Constitutional Commission, meetings with the Venice Commission, and publishing of the Commission opinion, the unilateral decision made by the ruling party to further postpone moving to the proportional election system is completely inadequate. Such approach undermines the work of the Constitutional Commission, as the primary purpose of the Commission is to consolidate public opinion and adopt the Constitution based on a consensus. Instead, the Georgian Dream made a unilateral decision and changed its mind about moving to the proportional elections system for the 2020 elections. They did it without involving the stakeholders and by going against their expectations.

The argument cited by the ruling party about the difference of opinion within the party that led to the making of the said decision is unsubstantiated and unconvincing, and it seems that by maintaining the mixed election system the ruling party is trying to guarantee that they will be at an advantage in the 2020 elections.

We would like to remind the current parliamentary majority that in the previous parliament the coalition Georgian Dream refused to change the election system for the 2016 parliamentary elections; instead, they initiated a draft of Constitutional amendments for moving to the proportional election system for the 2020 elections. They said that the decision was a result of a compromise within the coalition but the proposal didn't pass due to lack of the opposition support. Today even though the Georgian Dream has a constitutional majority, it continues to delay adoption of its own initiative, this time citing a disagreement within the party as a reason. Such maneuvering and constantly avoiding change of the current electoral system when there is a broad consensus about it is frivolous and unreasonable.

Unfortunately, such approach raises serious questions about the future cooperation of the NGO sector and other stakeholders with the majority about a range of issues, because it gives an impression that participation of civil society is done for the sake of appearance only, and although constructive formats of cooperation exist no substantial changes can be achieved.

We would like to highlight that if the decision unveiled on June 19 about the election

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system is incorporated into the Constitution, the changes to be implemented will not be the subject of a consensus or a broad agreement but rather, the result of a decision made by a single party behind closed doors. We believe that the move to the proportional system must be done immediately, without any delays, and in consideration of recommendations of the Venice Commission.

In light of the above, we would like to once again strongly urge the following to ruling party:

- take into account recommendations of the Venice Commission and NGOs, as well as the pledge that it has made to the public, and make decisions related to the electoral system with maximum consensus and without haste, to ensure that the constitutional amendments do not seem to be tailored to interests of a single party.

International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED)

Transparency International –Georgia (TI)

Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF)

Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA)

Liberal Academy

Civil Development Agency (CiDA)

Human Rights Centre

Institute for Development Freedom of Information (IDFI)

Media Development Foundation (MDF)

Georgia's Reforms Association (GRASS)

42 Article of the Constitution

Economic Research Policy Center (EPRC)

Georgian Institute of Politics (GIP)

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Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center (EMC)