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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have an honor to greet you and briefly share with you the experience my organization has acquired with regard to involvement in lawmaking process and its transparency.

My name is Maia Meskhi and I represent Civil Society Institute Foundation, where I'm in charge of projects supporting transparency of legislative processes.

Period following Revolution of Roses, as the country has entered a new stage of development, has stimulated particular lawmaking activity – naturally helped along by reforming process started shortly after. Government, acknowledging the importance of lawmaking transparency for democratic development, is willing to support civil involvement in lawmaking processes.

Since 2004, following election of the sixth convocation of the Parliament, our Institute has continuously been carrying out series of projects *Civil Society's Involvement in legislative Processes*. Main goal of these projects is establishment of administrative accountability and support of policy publicity principle on legal level, driving idea being achievement of transparency of legal processes by means of establishment of civil control and public participation in lawmaking through constructive cooperation with the Parliament and timely delivery of information, as well as lobbying of public interest in lawmaking.

Under the project, Institute cooperates with the Committees of the Parliament of Georgia, Supreme Council of Adjara Autonomous Republic and Ministries of Georgia. It should be understood that the process is not easy and hangs on the effort on the part of the Institute, and rapidity of the process often conditions hindrance on the way of achieving total transparency. It should be noted that more fruitful cooperation has been established with Supreme Council of Adjara Autonomous Republic. Greater success here has been conditioned by the fact that Council is located far from the capital, in the administrative center Batumi and there is a need for professional aid and professional knowledge is more noticeable in the region.

Activities of our Institute exercised in cooperation with its partners are as follows:

- Following policy of increasing public awareness of lawmaking processes, draft laws submitted to the Parliament are published on specially created web-portal. This component of the project aims at informing interested parties about presumable amendments of the legislation as early as its submission to the Parliament – whilst it is yet comparably easier to alter them than get engaged in full-fledged lobbying amendments to already adopted legal acts. Web-portal is actively used both by non-governmental and international organizations and governmental bodies alike, in Tbilisi and outside the capital. Necessity of the project component is conditioned by the current situation in Georgia, as the Government, despite its best effort to increase efficiency and ensure transparency and accountability still lacks resources and means. Web-portal is the only place on the web to publish draft laws and amendments along with the official Explanatory Notes.

- Electronic bulletin on legal news is being prepared and distributed for free to e-mail subscribers all over the country, encompassing representatives of Georgian and English-speaking governmental, non-governmental and international organizations. Bulletin contains brief description of the draft law currently submitted to the Parliament and info on its initiators and authors along with relation of draft law's authors' opinion on issues new act is supposed to address, including dates draft law is due to be read to Committees and Plenary Session, when applicable.
- For legislative packages of most importance capable of having significant effect on the whole legal framework independent expert reviews are being prepared to be present to the Committees of the Parliament.
- Lobbying constitutes one of the important components of the project. Parliamentary readings are attended by independent experts providing independent opinion. Rate of success of the given and the previous component is relatively low, as legislators tend to take into account only technical notes and recommendations relating to legislative technique, whilst influencing final edition of a draft law is a practically very difficult as quite often legal initiative has political roots. It should be noted that quite often members of the Parliament themselves call for Institute's independent legal analysis.
- Institute is carrying out monitoring of existing legislation that constitutes of study of execution of laws in force research of level of laws' efficiency and detection of defects. In practice, monitoring contains series of micro-researches directed at finding out whether given law works well or not, how its requirements are met and if there are any defects in its carrying out. On the basis of research detailed report is being prepared along with recommendations with regards to found defects. Following report, appropriate amendments package is prepared to be presented to corresponding Committee of the Parliament to be reviewed for initiation.

Mentioned projects are being carried out by our Institute in close cooperation with donor organizations, including partnership and financial support of OSCE Mission to Georgia.

In May of current year, new convocation of the Parliament has been elected. Projects in support of lawmaking process are going on as before, in cooperation with our partners.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Yours Sincerely,

Maia Meskhi