



# Statement of Non-Governmental Organisations on the Cycle of TV Programmes Broadcasted by the TV Company GDS

The cycle of TV programmes started on the GDS TV in September, in which the former Prime Minister of Georgia and Bidzina Ivanishvili, the founder of the political coalition Georgian Dream, meet live the local journalists from all ten regions. The TV programme will be broadcasted on every Monday and Thursday before the elections.

Based on the announcement the format of the TV programme implied agitation in favour of the ruling party. According to the video clip, in the TV programmes in addition to other issues Bidzina Ivanishvili will talk about [ ] does not Georgian Dream have an alternative A [ ] The announcement video demonstrates the electoral number and symbol of Georgian Dream. It is evident from the format and content of the TV programme that the main goal of the programme is the agitation in favour of the ruling party and in its content it actually does not differ from the pre-election commercial.

If officially the TV programme was intended to be a type of an advertisement, it

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should have met the regulations on pre-election advertising determined by Articles 50 and 51 of the Election Code, according to which an advertisement may be charged or free of charge, should have specific running time and shall specify the information on the customer, etc.

As the TV programme does not have an official status of an advertisement, it may be the service rendered free of charge or at discount from a legal person determined by Article 25(2) of the Law of Georgia on Political Associations, which shall be considered as a donation according to the same provision. Therefore, we think that each TV programme must be considered as donation made by the GDS TV in favour of Georgian Dream Democratic Georgia.

Also, we believe that the format of the above stated TV programme in the pre-election period neglects certain principles of the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters of Georgia, approved by the Georgian National Communications Commission. Including, the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters calls the broadcasters for  the fulfilment of state and party functions in the pre-election period, in order to observe the principle of impartiality and objectiveness and to observe balance. A But the above mentioned format actually excludes the observance of balance among the electoral subjects participating in the elections, because the whole cycle of the TV programmes includes the interviews with the persons associated with the ruling political team. It is also notable that critical opinions or accusations are quite frequently expressed in the TV programmes, while the same format does not allow other political subjects to provide response or answers to them.

We address the State Audit Service to examine the above mentioned cycle of TV programmes of GDS TV and grant those actions the status of political donations if the above listed circumstances are confirmed. Furthermore, the service cost must be calculated and established whether the cost falls within the annual limit of donations in the amount of GEL 120 000, allowed by law.

Also we address Georgian National Communications Commission to examine whether the actions of the GDS TV complies with the legislation applicable to the pre-election period and the standards established by the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters of Georgia, and take appropriate measures if violations are identified.

We call the above agencies for timely examination of the issues specified in the

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application and the provision of public with the information on the measures taken by them. We also call the relevant agencies for active monitoring of other mass media means in order to timely identify similar violations and take relevant measures.

Transparency International Georgia

Georgian Young Lawyers' Association

International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy