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Statement of NGOs on Pending Amendments to the Election Code

On March 25, 2013, the bureau of the parliament of Georgia decided to review proposed amendments to the organic law of Georgia the Election Code of Georgia in expedited manner.

According to the proposed regulations, in following February, June or October it would be possible to hold interim self-government elections in municipalities where number of majoritarian members of Sakrebulo, whose authority was prematurely suspended, is at least 3. The existing stipulation allows holding of interim elections of Sakrebulo if

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number of such members is at least 5, and only in cases when upcoming municipal elections are set to be held in more than two years.

Notably, although a comprehensive reform of election laws is ongoing in Georgia and there has been a corresponding inter-factional task force set up in the parliament with the involvement of all stakeholders, the draft law is considered in expedited manner, without the involvement of the task force, broad discussions or participation of stakeholders.

We also disapprove of the fact that the Election Code is amended without involvement and consideration of opinions of the Central Election Commission, the agency that must ensure administration and holding of elections.

In view of the fact that municipal elections are scheduled to be held in May 2014, whereas interim parliamentary and presidential elections are scheduled to be held in April 2013 and October 2013 respectively, we believe that authors of the legal proposals have not submitted any evidence that would substantiate the necessity of holding interim elections one year ahead of the municipal elections, which would justify financial costs associated with every election cycle.

In this light, we call on the parliament of Georgia to allow public discussions on proposed amendments to the Election Code of Georgia and avoid adoption of the new regulations in expedited manner.