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**DECLARATION**  
**on Developing a Civil Society in Latvia**  
**and Cooperating with Nongovernmental Organizations**

Because a civil society is important to the sustainable development of the state and its people and because nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) affect the quality of decisions adopted by the Saeima, it is necessary to expand the cooperation between NGOs and the Saeima, to promote the development of a civil society and to improve the working environment of NGOs. The Saeima's cooperation with NGOs forms a closer relationship between legislators, on the one hand, and society and the individual, on the other hand. By cooperating with each other, the Saeima and NGOs aim to become successful partners in undergirding a civil society and in its involvement in the legislative process.

**Goal of the Declaration**

The goal of this Declaration is to ensure, on the basis of mutual understanding and support, the development of a civil society in Latvia, to improve the cooperation between the Saeima and NGOs and to emphasize the important function of NGOs in a democratic state.

**Principles of cooperation**

The Saeima urges society to form associations to have its interests represented by taking advantage of the opportunities afforded by the Associations and Foundations Law and by actively participating in decision making on the local, national and international level. NGOs, as an organized part of civil society, make that possible because they serve the interests of broad social groups, not narrow commercial interests or the interests of political parties or associations.

The Saeima regards NGOs as equal partners, and it acknowledges that the participation of NGOs contributes significantly to the process of initiating, preparing and evaluating legislation. By improving the accessibility of information and by using the research results of NVO experts, the Saeima ensures the quality of the laws it adopts. In its cooperation, the Saeima and NGOs observe the principles of sustainability and continuity. The Saeima ensures openness and transparency in establishing this cooperation, and it offers equal opportunities to all NGOs. The Saeima does not support activities that result in fertile ground for corruption or conflict of interest or that give rise to suspicion of corruption or conflict of interest. The Saeima supports NGOs by working out legal norms that promote a favorable environment for the development of a civil society and NGOs. In order to strengthen civil society and to promote the participation of NGOs, the best practices of national and international organizations are used.

**The Saeima regards that the following measures are essential:**

- 1) to promote the creation of the necessary legal environment for developing and strengthening a civil society and for the activities of NGOs; this environment includes a favorable financial and budgetary policy;
- 2) to especially support the involvement of regional NGOs in decision making and, together with these organizations, to develop mechanisms for promoting their participation on the regional and national level;

- 3) to especially support the formation of NGO cooperation networks and NGO activities in developing a civil society, as well as in other areas that benefit society.

**The Saeima decides the following:**

- 1) to regularly evaluate the cooperation between the Saeima and NGOs and to promote the sharing of experience by committees of the Saeima, thereby facilitating the formation of a unified method for involving NGOs in the process of preparing legislation;
- 2) to ensure that the Saeima as a whole and each committee of the Saeima has a coordinator for cooperation with NGOs;
- 3) to constantly improve the Saeima home page and other mechanisms in order to inform NGOs and society about the work of the Saeima and its committees and to promote the awareness of NGOs about opportunities to participate in the process of preparing legislation;
- 4) to involve, in accordance with a specific procedure, representatives from NGOs in the work of Saeima committees, as well as to listen to the viewpoints and recommendations of NGOs and society concerning issues that are within the relevant committee's sphere of competence;
- 5) to arrange, in accordance with a specific procedure, the review of proposals for improving draft laws or draft resolutions;
- 6) to arrange a meeting at least once a year of the Saeima leadership, Saeima committee chairmen and NGO representatives—a forum in which to evaluate the results of cooperation and to work out a program for future cooperation;
- 7) to encourage the forum to establish a cooperation institution whose goal is to manage and coordinate the cooperation between the Saeima and NGOs, to compile and review recommendations for developing a civil society and for improving cooperation between the Saeima and NGOs.

Speaker of the Saeima:

Ingrīda Ūdre

Rīga, 30 March 2006