



## EU-RUSSIA CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM ГРАЖДАНСКИЙ ФОРУМ ЕС-РОССИЯ

### **Statement of the Steering Committee of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum *“On the Goldman Environmental Prize for Suren Gazaryan”***

**The Steering Committee of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum welcomes the decision on the Goldman Environmental Prize for Suren Gazaryan, Board member of the Non-Governmental Organisation “Environmental Watch on North Caucasus” (EWNC), which has been actively participating in the Forum’s work.**

The decision on the awarding of Suren Gazaryan is an important recognition of his merits in the fields of ecology, nature preservation and human rights.

This award is especially significant under the actual circumstances, when the activities of the “Environmental Watch on North Caucasus” were discontinued in March 2014 by the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Adygea for half a year, another Board member Evgeni Vitishko serves a 3-year term in prison after campaigning against capture of forests and the seashore line in the Krasnodar region on an arguable court verdict, whereas Suren Gazaryan himself had to abandon the territory of the Russian Federation to avoid persecution based on the same file.

Prize’s jury members underlined Gazaryan’s merits in stopping large-scale wood felling in the landscape reserve forest “Chernogorie” as well as participation in the grass roots protest campaign against the unlawful construction of a private road on state’s resources to the place of building a sports and recreation centre in the nature protected area. Besides, he also revealed corruption and violation of ecological norms in the course of construction for the Olympic Games in Sochi, for a dacha of Alexander Tkachev, Governor of the Krasnodar Region as well as for a palace on the Idokopas Cape for the Administration of Affairs of the President of the Russian Federation.

The Steering Committee of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum congratulates Suren Gazaryan with the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize and urges the Russian authorities to immediately revise the decisions to prosecute Suren Gazaryan, to imprison Evgeni Vitishko, and to suspend the activities of the “Environmental Watch on North Caucasus”.