

## **Official justification for awarding the 2022 Max van der Stoel Award to the Social Justice Center (SJC) from Georgia**

The Jury of the Max van der Stoel Award has decided to honour the Social Justice Center from Georgia with the 2022 Max van der Stoel Award in recognition of its work to support and empower vulnerable groups, including national minorities, in Georgia.

Since its foundation in 2012, the Social Justice Center (formerly Human Rights Education and Monitoring Centre) has worked towards long-term political and socio-economic transformation in Georgia, thereby putting the principles of human rights, equality and solidarity into practice. The Social Justice Center gives a voice to minority ethnic and religious groups, and supports their interests, with an emphasis on youth and women.

This non-governmental organization advances equality, solidarity, participation and democracy at the political, economic and social levels through programmes such as the Social Policy Programme, the Equality Policy Programme and the Justice and Democracy Programme. This has resulted in community organizations and campaigns to promote the interests of national minorities.

The Social Justice Center stands for human, including minority, rights. It strives to secure fundamental rights and freedoms for all, including national minorities, by advancing their legal status and protection. It campaigns for anti-discrimination policies, women's rights and access to justice. It aims to give space to minority voices and empowers ethnic minority groups and activists, such as those working through the Salam platform. It conducts research-based advocacy campaigns on minority issues and provides legal support to people from ethnic and religious minorities.

The Social Justice Center stands for participation. It works to influence the political agenda by co-operating closely with policymakers and minority communities. By doing so, it aims to trigger social and political advances in society through the democratic process in Georgia.

The Social Justice Center stands for the socio-economic inclusion of the most vulnerable people in society. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed how persistent societal inequalities have left many vulnerable communities in an even more precarious situation. The Social Justice Center has been advocating to reduce the negative impacts of the pandemic on the social, economic and cultural rights of minority communities in Georgia.

Acknowledging its activism and courage as it tirelessly advocates for equality for all social groups in Georgia, the Jury took the unanimous decision to reward the Social Justice Center with the 2022 Max van der Stoel Award.

