

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

DELEGATION TO OBSERVE THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN ARMENIA (12 May)

Election observation mission 9-14 May 2007

**Report by
Mrs Marie Anne ISLER BEGUIN,
Chairperson of the delegation
28 June 2007**

Annexes:

- A. List of participants**
- B. Programme**
- C. Press release by the International Election Observation Mission (13/05)**
- D. Preliminary statement of the International Election Observation Mission (13/05)**

Introduction

Following the receipt of an invitation sent by the Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, Mr Tigran Torosyan, to the European Parliament on 23 February 2007, the Conference of Presidents authorised, on 15 March 2007, an eight-member election observation delegation to monitor the legislative elections scheduled for 12 May 2007.

The members were appointed by the political groups as follows: Mr Panayiotis DEMETRIOU (EPP-ED, Cyprus); Mr Arpad DUKA-ZOLYOMI (EPP-ED, Slovakia); Mrs Gabriele STAUNER (EPP-ED, Germany); Mr Tadeusz ZWIEFKA (EPP-ED, Poland); Mr Saïd EL KHADRAOUI (PES, Belgium); Baroness NICHOLSON OF WINTERBOURNE (ALDE, United Kingdom); Mr Ryszard CZARNECKI (UEN, Poland). In accordance with the decision of the Conference of Presidents, Mrs Marie Anne ISLER BEGUIN, Chairwoman of the Delegation to the EU-Armenia, EU-Azerbaijan and EU-Georgia Parliamentary Cooperation Committees took part of the delegation.

On 16 April 2007 a constituent meeting of the delegation was held, at which Mrs ISLER BEGUIN was elected chairperson by acclamation. At the same meeting it was agreed that the eight members should be split into four teams for the Election Day and that each team should cover a different geographical area of the country. The delegation met again on 2 May when the Members exchanged views with H.E. Mr Viguen TCHITECHIAN, Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to the EU on the situation in Armenia and also took final decisions with regard to the programme and the deployment of the delegation.

As usual in the OSCE area, the European Parliament delegation formed part of the joint International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) that also comprised the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Mrs Tone Tingsgaard (Sweden), Vice President of OSCE PA and head of the OSCE PA delegation, was also the Special Coordinator leading the short term observers in Armenia. The delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe was chaired by Mr Leo Platvoet (Netherlands). The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) was headed by Ambassador Boris Frlec. The OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission (EOM) in Armenia had comprised a Core Team of 13 experts and 29 long term observers and had deployed 300 short term observers on the election day.

Political context

Past elections since independence in September 1991 in the Republic of Armenia have fallen short of international standards for democratic elections, according to international observer reports.

That is why these legislative elections on 12 May were seen by the international community as an important indicator of the democratic progress in Armenia.

On an internal level, political parties were positioning themselves for these parliamentary elections with an outlook to the 2008 presidential elections. The

incumbent president, Mr. Robert Kocharian, will not be able to stand, having completed two terms, as provided by the Constitution.

Before these elections the Government coalition was composed of three parties: the Republican Party of Armenia (HHK), which is the largest of the three parties in the government, Dashnaksutsiun (Armenian Revolutionary Federation, HHD) and the United Labour Party (ULP). ULP has replaced the Orinats Yerkir (Country of Law) party in the governing coalition in May 2006. These three parties in the governing coalition have 56 members of parliament out of 131 seats.

A new interesting development on the political scene was the Bargavash Hayastan (Prosperous Armenia, BH) party, created by the businessman Gagik Tsarukian a year before. Recently the party had been handing out "humanitarian aid" for rural residents, a fact that led to accusations from the HHK that the BH was trying to buy a way into the parliament.

The 131 members of the National Assembly are elected according to a mixed election system. The number of parliamentary seats elected through the proportional system is 90 (with a threshold of 7%) while the number of seats elected in single-mandate constituencies is 41. The Parliament will be elected for a five year term.

The legal framework for the electoral process has changed since the last parliamentary elections in 2003 (the electoral code was amended in two stages, in 2005 and 2006). However, the main concern noted in previous elections was not the shortcomings of the law, but the failure to implement the legislation.

Serious irregularities such as ballot box stuffing, falsification of results protocols, destruction of valid ballots to make figures tally, intimidation of observers and proxies and violation of the secrecy of the ballot were noted for the last parliamentary and presidential elections held in 2003.

Up to the present moment no election official has been held accountable for these violations. This atmosphere of impunity created a certain degree of disillusionment on the part of the population. Therefore, the overall public confidence in the electoral process appears to remain low.

One significant challenge is to involve the large Armenian diaspora in the election process. Citizens of Armenia residing abroad have the right to vote in parliamentary elections only in proportional elections. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, some 16,000 voters voted in 2003 for the parliamentary elections at the polling stations in diplomatic missions. This figure is widely considered to be a small proportion of the Armenian citizens residing abroad. In February 2007, further amendments to the Election Code were adopted with regard to this matter in the sense that no vote would be conducted in Armenian embassies and consulates and therefore foreign residents had to return to Armenia in order to vote. Those with dual citizenship would only be permitted to do so if they are registered in Armenia.

An issue of concern following elections in 2003 was the weak representation of women in government, elected bodies and political party leadership. Representation of women in the parliament before these elections was very low – only 7 out of 131 seats were held by women. According to the electoral code, women should make up

15% of a party's list for the proportional election and hold every tenth position on party lists. This is considered an improvement from the 2003 parliamentary elections.

What was broadly expected from the Armenian authorities in these elections was greater political will and good-faith for the implementation of the electoral legislation.

Programme of the observation mission

10 May 2007

Breakfast with EU Ambassadors

Members exchanged views with the EU Ambassadors on various subjects.

It was underlined that there was a high level of apathy on the part of Armenians towards the political environment. It seemed that people did not believe in democracy anymore, as there was clearly a lack of interest from Armenians towards internal politics.

Parties in Armenia were more personality oriented than based on clear platforms. In the electoral race, it seemed that "power" was perceived as a tool to make good business.

The authorities were more concerned about the image of Armenia in front of the international community than the results.

Several short term observers with Turkish citizenship were rejected visas by the Armenian authorities. This was obviously a negative sign that could have a certain impact on the already tense Turkish - Armenian relations.

Armenian authorities reacted to the third Interim report of OSCE/ODIHR, by criticizing the observations included in this document. This reaction was a sign that clearly showed the nervousness of the authorities with regard to the election observation process.

EC Delegation

Silva Maria Zehe, EC Desk Officer on Armenia, briefed the members on the main points of the newly agreed European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plan for Armenia. The document was signed on 13 November 2006 by all three South Caucasus countries. The main priorities for the Action Plan are: assistance for the development of the judiciary, support for poverty reduction efforts and assistance for the development of the education system.

Implementing the Action Plan raised a considerable challenge for the Armenian Ministries, which generally were very keen in getting involved in this process. The Action Plan is a good tool for enhancing EU visibility in the country. On the same subject, it was proposed that an EC Info Center could be established in the country.

OSCE/ODIHR Joint Briefing Programme (the programme is annexed to the report)

As usual, the delegation participated in the briefings organized by OSCE/ODIHR for the parliamentary assemblies that took part in the IEOM.

The members of the European Parliament delegation were briefed by OSCE/ODIHR experts on the pre-election situation.

Members were informed that 22 parties and one political block would compete for seats to be filled by proportional representation. Some of these parties have also nominated candidates for seats to be filled by the majoritarian vote. No party was seeking to run a candidate in every constituency for the majoritarian vote and some others (especially minor ones) have opted not to contest any majoritarian seats and to concentrate on the proportional competition. It should be noted that even more visible parties had a low number of candidates in the majoritarian race: Dashnaktutiu - 1 candidate, National Unity Party - 4 candidates, Armenian People's Party - 2 candidates.

The electoral campaign environment was defined as generally peaceful and very active, as various means (billboards, rallies and public meetings) were used to spread the messages of the competitors.

Concerning the media, it was underlined that broadcast media, television especially, were the dominant source of information in the country. There are 57 channels in total operating in the country.

The legal framework of the parliamentary elections encompasses the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia and the Election Code. The Constitution was adopted in 1995 and amended after a national referendum in 2005. The Election Code provides a consistent basis for the conduct of democratic elections. The Code was amended in 2005 and 2006 in accordance with the recommendations made by OSCE/ODIHR and the Council of Europe's Venice Commission.

Roundtable with NGO representatives

The following representatives of civil society took the floor: Mr Avetik Ishkhanyan, Office Director Helsinki Committee of Armenia, Harutyun Hambartsumyan, Office Director It's Your Choice, Aghasi Yesayan - Chief of Party IFES, Andrew Bennett - Country Director NDI.

It was explained that the electoral environment for these elections was calmer now than in previous years. Fifty-three nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) were registered for accreditation, indicating a high level of local civil society interest in the 12 May elections. The CEC refused accreditation to ten NGOs, mainly because they did not meet the requirement that their statute includes "democracy and human rights protection" among "their area of activity" as the Election Code requires in Art. 29.

"It's your choice", which is the largest observation organisation, had 4000 observers accredited for the election day. "It's your choice" has established a long term election observation mission, with two long term observers in each of the 41 electoral districts

of the country. The organisation will issue a press release following the election day as well as a final report at a later stage.

It was underlined that the Central Election Commission (CEC) enjoyed a training from IFES, both at central and regional level. The IFES representative defined the collaboration with CEC in "very productive" terms. IFES assisted CEC in matters such as voters' registration and voters' education as well as training the territorial election officials. The NDI representative added that political party monitors were trained through an NDI project in Armenia.

Roundtable with Media representatives

Mr Boris Navasardyan - President of the Yerevan Press Club, Mrs Nina Iskandaryan - Head of Curriculum of the Caucasus Media Institute, Mr Vartan Kopyan - Deputy President of the National Council on Public Radio and Television and Mr Gegham Manukyan - Political Information Program Adviser Yerkir Media participated in the discussions.

Both Yerevan Press Club and Caucasus Media Institute conducted a survey of the media coverage for the electoral campaign, which led to similar findings. Both representatives of the above mentioned organisations underlined that the Armenian Republican Party (HHK) enjoyed a larger coverage than other parties engaged in the electoral race. According to Caucasus Media Institute, HHK had 21% coverage on the TV channels monitored and 16% radio coverage (the instituted surveyed 6 TV channels and 2 radios). At the same time it was noted that the Country of Law (Orinats Yerkir) had generally negative coverage.

The Yerkir Media representative added that even though the number of parties enrolled in the electoral process is rather high, there were some of them that did not even look for media participation (e.g. Communist Party).

As a positive aspect it was outlined that the political campaign was very professional from the technical and strategic point of view. "We faced a modernisation of the political campaign", Mr Manukyan added.

As a negative facet, the absence of broadcasted debates on the electoral process by political analysts was noted.

11 May 2007

Meeting with Mr Garegin Azaryan, Chairman of the Central Election Commission, Mr Ararat Mahtesyan, Deputy Chief of Police and Mr Gevorg Danielyan, Deputy Prosecutor General

The Chairman of CEC presented the electoral administration system. The electoral administration framework has three layers: the Central Election Commission, 41 Territorial Election Commissions and 1,923 Precinct Election Commissions. All commissions at all levels have nine members and therefore around 20,500 people are involved in the electoral commissions at various levels. Mr Garegin Azaryan added that about 14,000 domestic observers were accredited by CEC for the election day.

Asked about the estimated number of voters of the diaspora, the Chairman replied that all Armenian citizens living abroad will be able to vote only if they are in Armenia on voting day and if they are registered at an address in the country.

The Deputy Chief of Police stressed that the voting lists are compiled and maintained by the Passport and Visa Department of the Police (OVIR), under the Election Code amendments introduced in 2005. Efforts were made to correct inaccuracies in the voting list. The Police carried out door to door checks on residency records and also media announcements were made requiring public involvement for correcting the voting list. The Deputy Prosecutor General noted that initially there were about 2,300,000 voters registered, but after the checking campaign, 42917 names were erased from the lists.

The scheduled meeting with the Parliamentary Working Group for the Organisation of Elections in compliance with International Standards did not take place.

Round table with political parties¹

The following party representatives were present at the discussions: Davit Haroutiunyan, Republican Party, Karapet Hovhannisyan, Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Grigor Ghonjeyan, United Labour Party, Arthur Baghdasaryan, Orinats Yerkir (Country of Laws), Felix Khachatryan, Armenian People's Party, Raffi K. Hovhannissian - Heritage, Aram Safaryan, Arthur Tamazyan - Prosperous Armenia.

The party representatives made reference to their campaign platforms, the electoral process environment as well as their organisation with regard to the electoral process.

The representatives made reference to the fact that they would monitor the election day closely (Armenia Revolutionary Federation, Orinats Yerkir and Prosperous Armenia made a strong statement on this matter).

With regard to the election campaign some representatives complained that there were some inequalities between parties during the electoral campaign (e.g. high prices for political advertising - Orinats Yerkir, unequal access to the media - Heritage, no billboards available for every political party - Heritage, National Unity Party)

On Nagorno-Karabach, a consensus seemed to be met amongst the representatives of the political parties in the sense that all agreed that this conflict should be solved through peaceful negotiations that should lead to a compromise solution.

As a general conclusion, it could be underlined that in general parties were more focused on the proportional elections while the majoritarian competition seemed to play a secondary role.

Meeting with Mr Robert KOCHARIAN, President of the Republic of Armenia

The President of the Republic met the delegation in a friendly atmosphere, as in similar past cases when European Parliament visited the country.

¹ The Members of the delegation followed partially the meeting, as at a certain moment they left for a meeting President Kocharian that took place in the premises of the President

Mr Kocharian highlighted the framework in which elections were taking place, namely stressing the importance of the implementation of the newly adopted Electoral Code.

He welcomed the presence of an EP election observation delegation and stressed the importance of an objective and balanced assessment of the forthcoming elections by the the international community present in the country.

The Chair of the delegation thanked the President for the meeting and reassured him that as in all EP election observations missions, the intention of the delegation was to proceed to a careful election observation and to provide an objective assesment in the framework of the OSCE International Election Observation Mission.

During the exchange of views which followed several points were tackled, referring to the Armenia's relations with its neighbour and particularly with Azerbaijan. The fact that Armenia had denied access to OSCE observers from Turkey was also raised.

Meeting with the Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr Armen BAYBURTIAN.

The Deputy Foreign Minister stated that the Armenian authorities are aware that the international community is closely following the electoral process and that credible elections would make a significant difference to the way Armenia would be perceived by its partners at the international level. The Deputy Foreign Minister underlined that within the European Neighbourhood Policy framework, holding good elections would have significant positive consequences for EU - Armenia relations.

Mr. Bayburtian explained that the New Electoral Code was adopted and the recommendations made by the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe and OSCE/ODIHR have been largely taken into consideration. The Deputy Foreign Minister commented on one of the recommendations that were not taken into account, namely the inking procedure. The Deputy Foreign Minister explained that this measure was not included in the Electoral code, as it was not considered an appropriate measure for safeguarding the voting process, as Armenia is a country in transition and not a third world country. Mr Bayburtian noted that another recommendation that (not adopted) referred to the necessity of reforming the body supervising the media activity. The Deputy Foreign Minister added that for the first time, the electors list was displayed on the internet.

With regard to the diaspora, which is very active and very interested in Armenian politics, the Deputy Foreign Minister stressed that Armenia has the particularity of having more Armenians living abroad than in the country. Mr. Bayburtian explained further on what the conditions were for an Armenian living abroad to vote in these elections.

Visit "Gloria" Project, EIDHR funded

The project was awarded to "Gloria" Women's Public Organisation which is affiliated to A1+ TV. This is one of the 20 micro projects ongoing in Armenia within the EIDHR Programme 2005 - 2006.

In 2002, the NCTVR (National Commission for Television and Radio) had revoked A1+ TV's license and subsequently gave it to a pro-government national television station. Since then, the station has remained vocal by producing television programs and internet publications.

Each year, Armenian journalists organise protests on the anniversary of the station's revocation and each year A1+ is applying without success for licence.

Through this project A1+ TV is supported so that it may continue its activities in order to ensure freedom of expression in Armenia, with emphasis on the rapidly developing media environment and sustaining independent broadcasting and the Internet. This is also contributing to strengthening the basis for civil society dialogue and democratic discourse for all political and civil forces.

Election Day, 12 May 2007

The delegation split into four teams as follows:

Yerevan:	Mrs. Marie Anne ISLER BÉGUIN, Mr Panayiotis DEMETRIOU,
Gyumri:	Mr Arpad DUKA-ZOLYOMI, Mrs Gabriele STAUNER
Hrazdan:	Baroness NICHOLSON
Artashat	Mr Tadeusz ZWIEFKA, Mr Saïd EL KHADRAOIU

The delegation visited about 50 polling stations during the election day. All four teams were content that Election Day proceeded in an orderly manner, the voters being able to cast their vote in an unobstructed and calm atmosphere.

On Election Day the delegation chair Mrs Isler Béguin was also engaged in drawing up the preliminary statement and press statement of the joint International Election Observation Mission. The heads of the delegations met several times during Election Day and on the following day in order to discuss their assessment of the election process.

13 May 2006

The delegation met on Sunday morning and discussed the election day. The conclusions of the delegation were introduced within the joint IEOM statement. After some intensive negotiations, an agreement was reached on the joint preliminary statement and the three chairs of the parliamentary delegations together with the head of the ODIHR mission presented their conclusions in the press statement on Monday 13 May. The full summary of the findings of the Election Observation Mission is appended to this report.

Conclusions

As a short term election observation mission, the delegation concentrated on monitoring the proceedings of the Election day. The delegation would like to thank OSCE-ODIHR for the excellent field work and the permanent evaluation of the process.

The delegation considers that the substantial international election observation mission deployed in the country has certainly contributed to enhancing the transparency of the whole election process.

With regard to its findings during the election day, the EP delegation noted that significant progress in the general voting process has been made, in comparison to the elections held in 2003 and concluded the following:

- The voting day started on time, and in the polling stations observed, the officials followed the opening procedures carefully and in accordance with the Election Code.
- During the election day, the process was generally well organised by members of the Polling Station Committees. Voters seemed familiar with the voting procedures and the polling staff well trained to fulfil their duties. The identification of the voters' lists went rather smoothly and the lists seemed to be generally accurate. At the same time, in cases where the voter was not identified, the possibility of adding him/her on a special list was granted.
- The secrecy of vote was fully ensured in all cases.
- Domestic observers and party representatives were present at all polling stations during the opening, voting and counting procedures.
- No campaign activity was noticed inside or in the vicinity of the polling stations. No tension or pressure on the voters was noticed in the polling stations visited by the delegation. Some polling stations got overcrowded at midday. In one case, in an overcrowded polling station in Hrazdan, a political party representative that was monitoring the process started to get involved in the process with a view to helping the chair of the polling station committee. Even though he was bypassing the role of an observer, it did not seem that his intentions were those of influencing the choice of the voters.
- With regard to the counting procedures, in all four cases observed the procedures were handled correctly by the polling station commissions. However, as described in the Election Code, the procedures provided for a complicated and lengthy process. No major irregularities that could cast doubt on the results of the elections were noticed.

The delegation therefore recommends improving the counting procedures in the future.

The delegation would like to commend the Armenian people on the conduct of these Parliamentary Elections and express the trust that any shortcomings would certainly be tackled in the near future, in particular with the view to the upcoming Presidential elections in early 2008.

The delegation also considers that Armenia has made a major step forward in its democratic process, which is a key objective of the European Neighbourhood Policy.

The European Parliament has followed the relations with the Armenian Republic very closely for many years and looks forward to enhancing these relations in the future.

Therefore, the European Parliament, through the Delegation to the EU-Armenia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee, looks forward to working closely, together with the newly elected National Assembly, towards further strengthening democratic structures in Armenia.

Results of the elections

With a turnout of around 60%, out of the 22 parties and one coalition taking part in the electoral competition, only 5 passed the 5% threshold. Prime Minister Serge Sargsyan's Republican Party (HHK), with 33.9% of votes took the majority (64 seats) in the 131-seat National Assembly. Mr. Sargsyan is also considered as one of the favorite candidates for the 2008 presidential elections. Prosperous Armenia, a new political party led by former world arm wrestling champion Gagik Tsarukian, gained 25 seats (15.1% votes). The third most represented political force in the Armenian Parliament is ARF - Dashnaktutyun with 16 seats (13.2%).

As far as the opposition forces are concerned, two of them entered the Parliament: the Country of Law Party, with 7.1% votes (9 seats) and the Heritage Party, which gained 7 seats (6.0%).

Among the new deputies, 12 (9,2%) are women.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION TO THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

9 - 14 May 2007

Members of the Delegation

Members:

Mrs Marie Anne ISLER BÉGUIN, <i>Chair of the Delegation</i>	Verts/ALE	France
Mr Ryszard CZARNECKI	UEN	Poland
Mr Panayiotis DEMETRIOU	EPP-ED	Cyprus
Mr Arpad DUKA-ZOLYOMI	EPP-ED	Slovakia
Mr Saïd EL KHADRAOUI	PES	Belgium
Baroness NICHOLSON OF WINTERBOURNE	ALDE	United Kingdom
Mrs Gabriele STAUNER	EPP-ED	Germany
Mr Tadeusz ZWIEFKA	EPP-ED	Poland

Secretariat of the Delegation:

Mr Pietro DUCCI (Italy), Head of Unit ff., Elections Observation Service

Mr Stefan PFITZNER (Germany), Head of Unit ff., Secretariat of Interparliamentary relations Europe

Mrs Adriana BUCHIU (Romania), Administrator, Election Observation Service

Mrs Elke SCHMUTTERER (Germany), Assistant

Secretariat of the Political Groups:

Mr Marek HANNIBAL (Czech Republic), Group of the European People's Party/European Democrats

Interpreters:

Mr Khachatur ADUMYAN (Armenia)

Mrs Zabela GHAZARYAN (Armenia)

Mrs Naira MANUKYAN (Armenia)

Mrs Kristina KARAPETYAN (Armenia)

Abbreviations :

EPP-ED	European People's Party/European Democrats	GUE/NGL	European United Left/Nordic Green Left
PSE	Party of European Socialists	IND/DEM	Independence/Democracy Group
ALDE	Alliance of Liberal and Democrats for Europe	UEN	Union for Europe of the Nations Group
Verts/ALE	Greens/European Free Alliance	NI	Non-attached

30 April 2007

PD/ES

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Election Observation Mission to Armenia PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

9 - 14 May 2007

FINAL PROGRAMME

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Tuesday, 8 May 2007 / Wednesday, 9 May 2007

Individual arrival of the members and staff of the European Parliament delegation and transfer to the hotel

Accommodation: (organised by the EC Delegation Office Yerevan)

Hotel MARRIOTT

Republic Square

Yerevan, 0010 Armenia

Tel. 00374-10-599 000 - Fax 00374-10-599001

Single room rate: 78000 AMD/night (about 160 EUR)

Major credit cards accepted.

Wednesday, 9 May 2007

- 10h30 Meeting with the Secretariat of the PACE (SECRETARIAT ONLY)
Venue: Hotel Marriott
- 12h00 - 14h30 Meetings of the Secretariats of ODIHR, OSCE PA, PACE and European Parliament (SECRETARIAT ONLY)
Venue: Restaurant Artashi Mot, Kochar 9/5, Yerevan
- 15h30 Meeting with the EC Delegation Office (SECRETARIAT ONLY)
Venue: Vienna Café (Hotel Marriott)
- 19h00 Meeting with interpreters (SECRETARIAT ONLY)
Venue: Hotel Marriott

Thursday, 10 May 2007

- 9h30 Breakfast briefing with H.E. Dr Heike PEITSCH, German Ambassador, representing the EU Presidency-in-Office of the Council of the European Union EU Ambassadors and EC Delegation
Venue: Hotel MARRIOTT
- 10h30 Departure from the hotel for
- 11h00 Meeting with representatives of the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights programme EIDHR (organised by the EC Delegation) "Gloria" Woman's Public Organisation (Affiliated to A1+ TV)
Venue: 1/3 Byuzand Str., 5th floor, Yerevan
- 11h45 EC Delegation - Short presentation of EC activities
Venue: 34 Sayat-Nova st., Yerevan, Armenia
- Lunch (own arrangements)
- 13h15 Departure from Hotel MARRIOTT for

Joint briefing/meetings with OSCE PA and PACE organised by the OSCE/ODIHR Venue: Hotel Golden Tulip Yerevan

- 13:30 – 14:00 **Welcoming Remarks**
(30 min) Ms Tone Tinggard, Vice-President of OSCE PA, Head of OSCE PA Delegation, Special Co-ordinator of the Chairman-in-Office for the OSCE Short Term Observers
Remarks by
Mr Leo Platvoet, Head of Delegation of the CoE Parliamentary Assembly
Ms Marie Anne Isler Beguin, Head of Delegation of the European Parliament
- 14:00 – 14:30 **Introduction and brief political analysis**
(30 min) Ambassador Vladimir Pryakhin, Head of OSCE Office in Yerevan
Ms Bojana Urumova, Special Representative of the Secretary General of the COE in Yerevan
Raul de Luzenberger, Charge d'Affaires of European Commission to Georgia and Armenia
- 14:30 – 16:15 **OSCE/ODIHR EOM Core Team**
Introduction
 - Ambassador Boris Frlec, EOM head of Mission**Political overview, Campaign activities and media landscape**
 - Lolita Cigane, EOM Political Analyst
 - Claudia Volmer, Gender Analyst

- Ivan Godarsky, EOM Media Analyst
- Elections Framework**
- Olexiy Lychkovakh, EOM Election Analyst
- Polling procedures and observation forms**
- Ian Gorvin, EOM Deputy head of Mission
 - Olexiy Lychkovakh, EOM Election Analyst
 - Stefan Szwed, EOM LTO Coordinator
- Basic Security Issues**
- Kjetil Hestad, EOM Security Expert
- 16:15 – 16:30
(15 min)
- 16:30 – 17:30
(1h.)
- Coffee Break**
- Roundtable with NGO representatives**
- Avetik Ishkhanyan - Office Director **Helsinki Committee of Armenia**
 - Harutyun Hambartsumyan - Office Director **Its Your Choice**
 - Chedomir Flego, Aghasi Yesayan - Chief of Party **IFES**
 - Andrew Bennett – Country Director **NDI**
- 17:30 – 18:45
(1h.15min)
- Roundtable with Media representatives**
- Boris Navasardyan - President **Yerevan Press Club**
 - Nina Iskandaryan - Head of Curriculum of the **Caucasus Media Institute**
 - Vartan Kopyan – Deputy President of **the National Council on Public Radio and Television**
 - Gegham Manukyan –Political Information Program Adviser **Yerkir Media**
 - Vahe Ghazaryan - Head **Kentron** News Department
- 19h00 Meeting of the Heads of the Delegations
Venue: Hotel Golden Tulip Yerevan
- 20h15 Departure from the Hotel Marriott for
20h30 Buffet-dinner hosted by **Mr Raul De Luzenberger**, Head of the EC Delegation in Armenia
Venue: Office of the EC Delegation to Armenia, 34 Sayat-Nova st., Yerevan

Friday, 11 May 2007

Joint briefing/meetings organised by the OSCE/ODIHR Venue: Hotel Golden Tulip Yerevan

- 09:00 – 09:30
(30 min)
- Garegin Azaryan - **Chairman of the Central Election Commission**
 - Ararat Mahtesyan - **Deputy Chief of Police** (voter lists)
 - Gevorg Danielyan - **Deputy Prosecutor General** (on working group on observance of legislation during elections)
- 09:30 – 10:00
(30 min)
- Tigran Torosyan, Chairman of the National Assembly - **Parliamentary Working Group for the Organisation of Elections in compliance with International Standards (TBC)**
- 10:00 – 11:00
(60 min)
- Roundtable with political Parties**
- Serge Sargsyan - **Republican Party (TBC)**
 - Karapet Hovhannisyan - **Armenian Revolutionary Federation**
 - Grigor Ghonjeyan- **United Labour Party**
 - Artur Bagdasaryan - **Orinats Yerkir** (Country of Laws)
- 11.00 – 11:15
11:15 – 12:15
(60min)
- Coffee Break**
- Roundtable with political Parties (continued)**
- Stepan Demirchyan - **Armenian People's Party (TBC)**
 - Artashes Geghamyan – **National Unity Party**

- Raffi K. Hovhannisian - **Heritage**
- Aram Safaryan, Arthur Tamazyan – **Prosperous Armenia**

12:30 – 13:30

Regional briefing for PA STO Teams in Yerevan by Yerevan LTO teams 1/2/3

12h00

Meeting with **Mr R. KOCHARYAN**, President of Armenia
(MEMBERS + 1 Secretariat ONLY)
Venue: Residence of President

14h45

Departure from the Hotel Marriott for

15h00

Meeting with **Mr Armen BAYBURTLIAN**, Deputy Foreign Minister
(MEMBERS + Secretariat ONLY)
Venue: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic Square

16h30

Departure to Giumri (Duka-Zolyomi, Stauner, Hannibal)

17h00

Meeting with the representatives of the EIDHR project "Developing the democratic electoral processes and media environment", contractor: "Gloria" Women's Public Organisation (affiliated to A1+ TV)

18h00

Meeting of Heads of Delegations
Venue: ODIHR Office, Yerevan

20h00

Dinner hosted by **Ms Marie Anne ISLER BEGUIN**, Chairman of the EP Election Observation Delegation (*Head of Delegation ONLY*)
Venue: Restaurant Dolmama, Pushkin Str 10, Yerevan, tel. (374 10) 561354

Saturday, 12 May 2007

ELECTION DAY -

Monitoring of voting in different areas:

Yerevan: ISLER BEGUIN, DEMETRIOU, DUCCI, SCHMUTTERER
(interpreter: MANUKYAN) - departure 7h15

Gyumri: DUKA-ZOLYOMI, STAUNER, HANNIBAL
(interpreter: KARAPETYAN)
- departure 11 May 16h30

Accommodation: Berlin Guest House:

32.000 AMD (68 EUR)/night, including breakfast;

driver's room: 27.000 AMD/night (56 EUR / 75 USD)

Hrazdan: Baroness NICHOLSON, BUCHIU (interpreter: GHAZARYAN)
- departure 5h45

Artashat/Ararat: ZWIEFKA, EL KHADRAOIU, PFITZNER (interpreter: ADUMYAN)
- departure 7h00

Sunday, 13 May 2007

9h00 Debriefing of EP Delegation
Venue: Hotel Marriott

10h30-14h00 Meeting of Heads of Delegations
Venue: ODIHR Office, Yerevan

10h30 Visit of Armenian cultural heritage (Echmiadzin)

Lunch (Own arrangements)

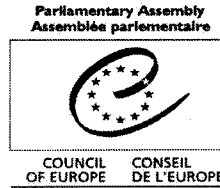
14h30 Joint Press conference
Venue: Hotel Marriott, Ballroom

16h00 Visit of the city centre of Yerevan

Dinner (Own arrangements)

Monday, 14 May 2007

Departure of the delegation



INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION PRESS RELEASE

Armenian poll demonstrates progress, observers say

YEREVAN, 13 May 2007 – In a joint statement today, the International Election Observation Mission for the 12 May parliamentary elections in Armenia concluded that the elections demonstrated improvement from previous ones and were largely in accordance with international commitments, although some issues remain unaddressed.

The mission commended steps taken by the Armenian authorities to address serious shortcomings, including amendments to the Election Code. The election campaign was dynamic with extensive media coverage. Election day was calm, with no major incidents reported, but a few cases of fraud schemes were observed. Some procedural problems arose during the count and tabulation of votes as well as isolated cases of deliberate falsifications.

Some 100 parliamentarians and 300 short-term observers monitored the elections for the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, OSCE/ODIHR, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, OSCE PA, the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, PACE, and the European Parliament, EP.

“These elections were a clear improvement and that is good for Armenian democracy“, said Tone Tingsgaard, Special Co-ordinator of the short-term election observers and Vice President of the OSCE PA. “Now, more work is needed to further consolidate this young democracy. That will require joint effort and will by all political forces. I hope we will see that happen in the years ahead.”

Leo Platvoet, Head of the PACE delegation said: “We congratulate the Armenian people on showing the will to hold democratic elections. Some challenges remain, such as intertwining between political and business interests and improvements are still needed to the electoral complaints procedure. The Council of Europe and its Assembly continue to stand ready to assist Armenia in this process.”

“With their participation in these elections, Armenian citizens have made a further step towards European democratic values as foreseen and promoted by the EU Neighborhood Policy. The EU delegation encourages the Armenian people to continue in this direction in view of forthcoming elections“, said Marie Anne Isler Beguin, who headed the EP delegation.

“Hopefully this election will contribute to restoring the trust of voters in the election process“, concluded Ambassador Boris Frlec, Head of the OSCE/ODIHR long-term mission. “But the election is not over. We will continue to follow the post-election developments; only once they have been concluded, will we have the full picture.”

The election authorities generally worked efficiently and were well prepared for election day. For the first time there was a central and computerized voter register. Amendments to the Election Code provided that women constitute at least 15 percent of each party/bloc list.

In its statement, the mission noted that the separation of state and the ruling party appeared less than distinct in the campaign.

Concerns remain, including gaps in the regulatory framework for elections, inconsistencies and legal contradictions. Furthermore, authorities were slow or non-responsive in correcting irregularities in the election process.

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INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA, 12 MAY 2007

STATEMENT OF PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Yerevan, 13 May 2007 – The International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) for the 12 May parliamentary elections in Armenia is a joint undertaking of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and the European Parliament (EP).

This statement of preliminary findings and conclusions is delivered prior to the completion of the election process, including the tabulation and announcement of final results, the handling of possible post-election day complaints or appeals, and the installment into office of the newly elected members of the National Assembly.

The election is assessed in line with OSCE and Council of Europe commitments, other international standards for democratic elections and national legislation. The final assessment of the election will depend, in part, on the conduct of the remaining stages of the election process. The OSCE/ODIHR will issue a comprehensive final report, including recommendations for potential improvements, approximately two months after the completion of the election process. The PACE will present its report at its Standing Committee meeting on 24 May.

The institutions represented in the IEOM stand ready to continue to support the authorities and civil society of Armenia in the conduct of democratic elections.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

The 12 May 2007 elections for the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia demonstrated improvement and were conducted largely in accordance with OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and other international standards for democratic elections. The Armenian authorities and other actors in the electoral process took steps to address previous shortcomings, but were unable to fully deliver a performance consistent with their stated intention that the election would meet international standards, and some issues remained unaddressed.

The Election Code was considerably amended and improved since the 2003 parliamentary elections, and provides a good basis for the organization of genuinely democratic elections, although some shortcomings remain. The amended Election Code clarifies a number of ambiguities in the process as well as the legal consequences of non-compliance.

The election authorities generally worked efficiently in the pre-election period, and were technically well equipped and prepared for election day. Candidate registration was carried out by the Central Election Commission (CEC) and the Territorial Election Commissions (TECs) in an inclusive manner.

Other positive aspects of the pre-election process included:

- The CEC demonstrated ongoing efforts to enhance transparency of election procedures, such as a schedule of regular press briefings and the provision of key information on its website.
- Substantial training of election officials and voter education efforts took place.
- For the first time there was a central and computerized voter register. The police, as the responsible agency, took proactive measures (along with the CEC and others) to correct inaccuracies and involve the electorate in upgrading the voter list through telephone hotlines and advance publication of the voter list on the CEC website.
- There was visible and dynamic campaigning by many contestants in both the proportional and majoritarian contests, which took place in a permissive environment.
- There was extensive media coverage of the election, with an apparent effort to enable most parties and candidates to convey their messages, although largely devoid of critical viewpoints.
- Public media adhered to legal requirements concerning allocation of free airtime during the official campaign period.
- Women's representation in the electoral contest was improved in line with the amended Election Code providing that women should constitute at least 15 per cent of each proportional contest party/bloc list and be in at least every tenth position on the list.

However, the following issues raised concerns:

- Gaps remain in the regulatory framework for elections. Existing regulations to address important areas of the electoral process, such as early campaigning and issues of possible vote buying were not implemented. The intertwining at all levels of political and business interests is of concern, especially in view of relatively weak provisions and enforcement regarding transparency and disclosure of campaign finances.
- The mechanisms to regulate the election process and correct irregularities were mostly passive. Publicly identified concerns were generally not acted upon in the absence of formal complaints.
- The complaints and appeals process brought to light inconsistencies and contradictory elements in the legal framework.
- TEC leadership "troikas" (chairperson, deputy chairperson and secretary) were dominated by representatives of the Republican Party, Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) Dashnaktsutjun and appointees of the President, which challenges the spirit of balanced composition as intended by Election Code provisions.
- The majoritarian contests were characterized by a low number of candidates – just under three per constituency on average. Seven out of 41 constituencies had only one candidate.
- The separation of the ruling party and the State appeared to be less than distinct in some important elements of the campaign, the most visible of which was the convergence of the election campaign of the Republican Party with a longer-running campaign celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of the Armenian Army, sponsored by the Ministry of Defense.
- Negative newspaper articles relating to private comments by an opposition leader, allegedly recorded surreptitiously, and subsequent public remarks by the president referring to those comments as a serious criminal act, introduced a negative element to the campaign environment.

Some violent incidents occurred during the campaign period, but they appear not to have significantly impacted upon the overall electoral environment.

On election day, voting took place in a mostly calm atmosphere. The conduct of voting was assessed positively in the vast majority of polling stations observed (94 per cent). Training of PEC members was evident with PECs generally following procedures, including the checking of voter identification. Domestic observers were present in 82 per cent of the polling stations. Some identified problems

included: unauthorized persons present in polling stations (17 per cent), overcrowding (14 per cent) and challenges to secrecy of voting due to the construct of voting booths (17 per cent).

Problems of an apparently more deliberate character emerged in some parts of the country. A few instances of tension due to the conduct of proxies or unauthorized persons were observed. People voting more than once were observed in two TECs and potential vote fraud schemes were identified in two cases.

Counting was mostly conducted according to procedures but in 17 per cent of polling stations observed the organizational requirements led to difficulties and consequently to an assessment of the counting as bad or very bad by IEOM observers. In a number of observations (6 per cent), the voter's choice on the ballot was either not declared, not shown to those present, or results for contestants not announced. Difficulties compiling protocols were observed in 20 per cent of PECs, and significant errors in 8 per cent. In at least three TECs, PECs completed protocols at the TEC premises, representing a lapse in procedure and the potential for results falsification. Deliberate falsification of results was observed at four polling stations, and an attempt in two polling stations.

While the IEOM does not have a complete impression of the results tabulation due to the slow rate of tabulation, although apparently within the legally prescribed timeframe, IEOM observers recorded procedural and technical errors.

Two issues of concern which did not impact on the election process itself were also noted by the IEOM:

The Armenian authorities' last-minute denial of visas to OSCE/ODIHR observers seconded by one OSCE participating State (Turkey) was not in line with the commitment in the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen document to invite election observers from any other OSCE participating State.¹

Prior to the elections, the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission (EOM) received criticism from State authorities, including in public written statements, that called into question both the veracity of its findings, and its methodology. The IEOM does not agree with such criticism and stands by the findings of the OSCE/ODIHR EOM third interim report.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Background

The 12 May 2007 elections were to elect 131 seats in the National Assembly (parliament). Members of the National Assembly are elected for five-year terms. Ninety seats are elected on the basis of a national proportional contest of party/bloc lists, and 41 by majoritarian contest in single-mandate constituencies. In the proportional contest, to win election a party must pass a threshold of 5 per cent of the valid vote, while a bloc must pass 7 per cent. In the majoritarian contests, the candidate polling the highest number of votes is the winner (first past the post).²

Previous elections in the Republic of Armenia in 2003, 1999, 1998, and 1996 have been assessed as falling short of OSCE commitments and other international standards for democratic elections.³

¹ OSCE Copenhagen Document, 1990, Art. 8: "They will therefore invite observers from any other [OSCE] participating State...to observe the course of their national election proceedings...".

² In cases where there is only one candidate, he or she must win more than 50 per cent of the valid vote.

³ For OSCE/ODIHR reports on previous elections in the Republic of Armenia (1996-2003), see <http://www.osce.org/odihr-elections/14350.html>

Changes in the political landscape affected the 2007 electoral competition. For this election, the Armenian Republican Party, ARF Dashnaksutjun and the United Labour Party did not enter the election as a coalition, although they were partners in government, while the Orinats Yerkir (Law-based State) Party left the government coalition in 2006. New political forces emerged, notably the Prosperous Armenia Party, while others fell into abeyance.

Prime Minister Andranik Margaryan, leader of the Republican Party, died suddenly on 25 March. Serge Sargsyan was named on 26 March to take on the party leadership functions, and on 4 April President Kocharyan appointed him as prime minister.

Legal Framework

The legislative framework for elections in Armenia consists mainly of the Constitution and the Election Code. The Code has been substantially amended since the 2003 National Assembly elections, and provides a good basis for the conduct of democratic elections. However, gaps remain in the regulatory framework for elections, and there were also failures to implement certain existing legislative provisions.

The Election Code guarantees State support and cooperation for campaigning on an equal basis. The formal campaign period begins after the registration of candidacies. The Code does not address what constitutes campaigning, and whether campaign activities or fundraising by election participants and third parties are permitted prior to the campaign period.

The CEC rejected a complaint against early campaigning brought by an NGO against Orinats Yerkir. The CEC found that the distribution of a leaflet constituted campaigning, but indicated that the absence of a clear prohibition on early campaigning, and constitutional protections for political expression and assembly, prevented it from concluding that there had been a violation.

The Constitution requires openness of political party and campaign finances, but deficiencies in disclosure, reporting and overall supervision were noted. The absence of clear prohibitions on early and indirect campaigning, and deficiencies in enforcing party and campaign finance regulations, leave scope for electoral contestants to exceed campaign finance limitations. This could subvert the intent of campaign finance limitations stipulated in the Election Code. The CEC has no competence to investigate whether a party/candidate has failed to disclose relevant financial transactions outside the campaign fund a contestant must established. Examination of the available 2006 financial reports of political parties by the OSCE/ODIHR EOM indicated that they lacked detail and could not serve as a sufficient basis for monitoring campaign finance. It is also questionable whether the reported amounts are accurate: for example, Prosperous Armenia reported that it had no income, expenditures or property at all in 2006.

The Election Code prohibits parties and candidates, during the official election campaign, from giving or promising goods and services to voters – commonly referred to as “vote buying”. The statutory provision does not appear to require specific intent to influence a voter to constitute a violation. The OSCE/ODIHR EOM directly observed one episode of provision of goods by a political party that met the legal definition of prohibited conduct in an election campaign. Generally, the legal prohibition was not enforced. The prosecutor-general informed the OSCE/ODIHR EOM that his office would act only in cases in which intent to influence voters could be demonstrated.

During the campaign period substantial attention in the media to government activities included a prominent focus on Prime Minister Sargsyan. The manner in which his public appearances around the country were presented by the media, not clearly differentiating between his roles as prime minister and leader of the Republican Party, appeared to confirm the difficulty in applying legal provisions concerning political campaigning by officials.

Election Administration

The election administration comprises the CEC, 41 TECs (corresponding to the 41 majoritarian constituencies), and 1,923 Precinct Election Commissions (PECs). The CEC and TECs are permanent bodies, while PECs were formed by 27 April. The amended Election Code provides for a more balanced composition of election commissions: one member is nominated by the president, one each by the six parliamentary factions and the “peoples’ deputy” group (deputies elected as non-partisan), and one “judicial servant”. There is a hierarchy of appointment, each representative on the CEC nominating one member to each TEC, who in turn nominated a member to each of the PECs under that TEC.

During the pre-election period the CEC made notable improvements in its efficiency and transparency of procedures. All necessary election preparations were made within the required timeframe. The CEC established a schedule of regular press briefings, and introduced on its website a chart on complaints it had considered. In accordance with amendments to the Election Code requiring publication of election results by precinct, the CEC introduced a networked computer system linking it to the TECs.

TECs appeared to be well prepared for the elections and generally to be working in a collegial manner. However, the TEC leadership “troikas” (chairperson, deputy chairperson and secretary), although elected by the TEC, were dominated by the representatives of the Republican Party, ARF Dashnaksutjun and appointees of the President. This challenges the spirit of balanced composition as intended by Election Code provisions. In two TECs, members acknowledged that the Orinats Yerkir-appointed member had been removed from the TEC troika because that party was now in opposition. Influence of local self-government bodies over the work of TEC 17 (Artashat) and TEC 19 (Yeghednadzor) appeared to breach the provisions for independence stated in the Election Code.

PEC leadership “troikas” had a more diverse composition than TEC “troikas”. PECs were extensively trained for election day and provided with materials explaining election day procedures in detail. The CEC produced short TV films explaining election day procedures to voters, which were broadcast throughout the official campaign period.

Election code amendments enacted in 2005 charged the police with compiling a centralized and computerized voter register. For these elections, additional efforts were made by the police and CEC as well as by local community leaders, political parties and NGOs to correct inaccuracies (mainly surplus names and voters registered at incorrect addresses). The police and the CEC repeatedly called through the media for public cooperation to correct the voter list, which could be checked on the CEC website or at polling station premises, and errors then reported to election authorities or via police hotlines.

Candidate registration was inclusive. All twenty-four parties and one bloc that applied were registered by the CEC, and no individual candidate from any list was refused registration. After two parties withdrew their lists, twenty-two parties and one bloc were on the ballot for the proportional list contest. Of the 141 persons who submitted documents for registration as majoritarian candidates, 135 were registered by the TECs. Five withdrew before registration, and there was one refusal due to incomplete documentation. A small number of withdrawals after registration (commonly citing negligible prospects of winning), and two de-registrations (see below) resulted in a total of 119 candidates in the majoritarian contest – an average of just under three per constituency.

No party sought to field a candidate in every constituency (only the Republican Party attempted a countrywide presence). Most parties decided to concentrate resources instead on the proportional election. There were seven constituencies with only one candidate, and eleven with only two candidates. The majoritarian contests reflected local rather than nationwide political dynamics.

Complaints and Appeals

The Election Code permits appeals to the courts against actions (or inaction) of election commissions. The CEC and TECs have responsibility under the Code to review actions by subordinate election commissions. There was a discernible deficit in this regard due to evident passivity and lack of initiative by the electoral and other authorities responsible for upholding the regulatory framework, who stated that they would only take action upon receipt of a formal complaint.

While complaints received by the CEC were handled with overall transparency, some of its official responses (these were not characterized as “decisions”) were not sufficiently reasoned. For example, in response to a complaint by Orinats Yerkir that a mayor had breached the requirement for provision of state-owned premises as campaign venues free of charge, the CEC confirmed the definition of state property as central government and not local self-government property.⁴ However, this was contrary to practice already widely in evidence during the campaign.

A small number of complaints were filed with TECs, and none upheld. TEC and court decisions in some instances were arbitrary and inconsistent. A court ordered TEC 19 to deregister two candidates, on the basis of an application by a third candidate. However, another court rejected a complaint that TEC 39 should deregister a candidate (while not disputing the substance of the complaint) on the grounds that a rival candidate did not have competence to apply to court for a candidate’s deregistration.

The Election Code and provisions of the Civil Procedure Code on election-related disputes declare election-related first instance court decisions to be final and not subject to appeal, but in six decisions on complaints rendered on 3 May the court of first instance granted the right of appeal, citing different provisions of the Civil Procedure Code. Additionally, the constitutionality of Civil Procedure Code provisions has been challenged in the Constitutional Court.

Campaign Environment

In the official campaign period, vigorous campaigning by most parties and majoritarian candidates was discernible throughout the country. Municipal and community authorities, almost without exception, met their obligations to designate places for the display of campaign materials. Besides these designated spaces, and advertising on commercially rented installations, a permissive environment prevailed, with posters widely placed on public and private buildings and installations.

There was a flexible approach towards the formal procedure whereby, on the basis of requests received and forwarded by the TECs, municipal and community authorities should put venues for campaign meetings at the disposal of political parties and candidates on the basis of equality and free of charge. In instances where parties or candidates applied instead directly to the municipal and community authorities, this was apparently with the approval of the TECs. Most parties appeared to favour an approach of holding previously unannounced or short-notice rallies, without prohibitive action from the authorities.

Highly visible and prevalent publicity to commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of the Armenian Army, sponsored by the Ministry of Defense, was launched prior to and ran throughout almost the entire campaign period. This was mainly visible in Yerevan, where about half the electorate resides. At a late stage in the campaign, the Republican Party campaign converged with the Army’s anniversary campaign, with evident crossover of campaign messages and featured participants. The merging of the image of the party (whose leader was until recently the Minister of Defense) with the symbols and accomplishments of

⁴ Local Government Law, Art. 70.2

the armed forces was evident.⁵ As a result, the separation between the ruling party and the State appeared to be less than distinct.

The Russian-language newspaper *Golos Armenii* published two editorials negatively describing a conversation between an opposition party chairman and a diplomat, allegedly clandestinely recorded. The editorials contended that the opposition leader was seeking a negative assessment of the parliamentary elections by the international community. These events and subsequent public remarks by the president referring to the aforementioned comments as a serious criminal act, introduced an element of pressure into the election campaign environment.⁶ Although the authorities have yet to underscore that free expression and secrecy of private communication are protected by the Armenian Constitution, they have said that an investigation would be undertaken. Further information on the investigation is still pending.

Widely circulating and apparently speculative comments about activities in preparation for election fraud could indicate mistrust and cynicism among the electorate. A person working for a majoritarian candidate in TEC 25 was arrested for vote buying on 9 May. The OSCE/ODIHR EOM also heard allegations that some voters were under pressure to vote for certain parties or candidates, for fear of consequences such as job dismissal. A candidate (and incumbent deputy) from Syunik region confirmed that workers at a large enterprise he owned were obliged to vote for him, but he characterized this as consistent with contemporary global corporate management styles.

There were some violent episodes shortly before and during the official campaign period, but their connection to the elections, or to election rivalries, was unclear, and they did not appear to impact on the electoral environment countrywide.

Media Environment

The Election Code provides for airtime to all candidates based on “equal conditions”. Each registered party/bloc in the proportional contest was entitled to a maximum 60 and 120 minutes of free airtime and no more than 120 and 180 minutes of paid airtime on public television and radio respectively. The CEC allotted the sequence of appearances in free and paid airtime by lottery. Public media adhered to their obligations in a somewhat formalistic manner: public TV *H1* decided that all free campaign slots could be broadcast daily as a bloc, in the time period set by the CEC but outside primetime viewing.

Almost all parties and blocs used their free airtime. On 19 April a majoritarian independent candidate appeared during the free airtime allocated to a party. Instead of deregistering the party for breaching the Election Code prohibition on transfer of airtime to another contestant, the CEC issued a general warning.

The country’s leading private broadcasters offered to air paid political advertisements, while local TV stations limited paid spots mostly to majoritarian contests, if at all. The national broadcasters’ advertising rates were criticized as prohibitively expensive by a number of contestants, and were high when compared to regular commercial rates.

Political and electoral events were extensively reflected in newscasts and current affairs programmes in the broadcast media.⁷ Many media outlets tried to cover a broad range of political subjects, and thus to

⁵ This runs contrary to OSCE commitments. See OSCE Copenhagen Document, 1990, Art. 5: “[A]mong those elements of justice which are essential to the full expression of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all human beings [is]” [... Art. 5.4]: “a clear separation between the States and political parties; in particular, political parties will not be merged with the State”.

⁶ OSCE Copenhagen Document, 1990, Art. 7.7: “[The participating States will] ensure that law and public policy work to permit political campaigning to be conducted in a fair and free atmosphere in which neither administrative action, violence nor intimidation bars the parties and the candidates from freely presenting their views...”

⁷ The OSCE/ODIHR EOM monitored seven television station, two radio stations and four newspapers, using quantitative and qualitative analysis, from 22 March through 10 May: *H1* (public-service broadcaster), *ALM TV*, *Armenia TV*, *H2*,

comply with legal provisions requiring equal conditions. Most monitored TV channels, however, devoted the highest portion of political information in newscasts to the government and to the Republican Party, the ARF Dashnaktsutiun and Prosperous Armenia.

The two public broadcasters (*H1* television and *Public Radio*) mostly guaranteed access to the media for contestants. *Public Radio* offered balanced political coverage (both in time and tone). *H1* covered a number of political subjects, with the government accounting for the highest portion (21 per cent of predominantly neutral and positive coverage). It was also the only broadcaster to pay most attention to the opposition Armenian People's Party (12 per cent). However, coverage of Orinats Yerkir questioned the channel's objectivity – *H1* was the only television channel to present the first *Golos Armenii* editorial (see above) verbatim in its main news programme. Later it aired at least twice the president's public remarks referring to the party chairman's private comments. Notwithstanding the editorial freedom to inform the public about these events, *H1* did not meet the basic journalistic standard of presenting a response from Orinats Yerkir.

The four nationwide TV channels – *H1* and the private channels *H2*, *Armenia TV* and *ALM TV* provided extensive coverage of the government (with 26 per cent on *H2*). All monitored private broadcasters dedicated most of their political news to the Republican Party (*ALM TV* and *Armenia TV*), Prosperous Armenia (*H2*, *Shant TV* and the highest portion in *Kentron TV*), or ARF Dashnaktsutiun (*Yerkir Media*). This coverage was positive and devoid of critical comment.

Television coverage of the elections presented overtly positive and neutral information, minimizing any critical viewpoints. Only radio stations, mainly RFE/Radio Liberty, broadcast critical viewpoints voiced by different contestants and voters. The print media displayed a diversity of views, including critical views, although no single media source could be relied upon to present balanced coverage.

The media generally respected a silence period that started 24 hours prior to the election day.

Participation of Women

Women are under-represented in political or public life in Armenia. In the outgoing government, one of sixteen ministers is a woman, and seven of 131 deputies in the outgoing parliament are women.

The amended Election Code requires the inclusion of 15 per cent women for party/bloc lists in the proportional contest (as compared with 5 per cent in 2003), and in at least every tenth position in the lists. However, of the 119 candidates contesting the 41 majoritarian seats, only five were women (running in three constituencies). The visibility of female candidates in the electoral campaign was low.

There are very few women in the election administration: two of nine CEC members, 15 per cent of TEC members and only three of 41 TEC chairpersons are women. Eleven TECs are all male. At PEC level, women are better represented: EOM observers reported 38 per cent women as members of PECs, including 23 per cent as chairpersons.

Domestic and International Observers

Fifty-two domestic observation groups observed election day. The CEC refused accreditation to ten NGOs, mainly because they did not meet the requirement that relevant activities were included in their statute, and deregistered one on the grounds that it violated the provision of non-partisanship.⁸ Domestic observers were present in 82 per cent of polling stations visited by the IEOM during voting and during 89

Kentron TV, Shant TV, Yerkir Media (TV channels); *Public Radio, RFE/Radio Liberty* (radio stations); *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* (State-funded), *Aravot, AZG, Haykakan Zhamanak* (newspapers).

per cent of counts. In addition to international organizations represented in the IEOM, the CEC accredited observers from the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States and its Inter-parliamentary Assembly.

A recent amendment to the Election Code limits access by international organizations wishing to observe elections in Armenia: the amendment requires that international organizations must be explicitly invited by one of the state bodies (the President, National Assembly, Government and CEC).

Election Day and Vote Count

On election day, voting took place in a mostly calm atmosphere. The conduct of voting was evaluated as very good or good in 94 per cent of polling stations. In many cases where it was assessed as problematic this was due to overcrowding (14 per cent) and the maintenance of conditions for secrecy of voting with the open-front voting booths (deficiencies in this regard were observed in 17 per cent of polling stations). Overcrowding – largely a consequence of challenging conditions at premises available to serve as polling stations, and poor weather in some parts of the country meaning that voters were unwilling to wait outside – caused one PEC in TEC 30 (Vanadzor) to close the polling station some 30 minutes early, denying the possibility to vote to people who were waiting. Unauthorized persons were present in 17 per cent of polling stations.

Problems of an apparently deliberate character were observed in TECs concentrated in parts of Aragatsotn, Armavir, Ararat, Gegharkunik, Lori and Vayots Dzor regions, leading to a higher prevalence of IEOM observers' negative assessments. People voting more than once were observed in polling stations in TECs 23 (Sevan) and 31 (Vanadzor-Alaverdi); an attempt by the PEC to conceal the same activity at a polling station in TEC 39 (Vayots Dzor) was observed. Outside one polling station in TEC 31 IEOM observers saw people having what appeared to be a false data page (including photograph) inserted into their passports, suggesting preparation for voter impersonation fraud. Vote buying was observed at another polling station in the same constituency. In a polling station in TEC 4 (Arabkir, Yerevan) a voter was observed taking a photograph of his marked ballot with his cellphone, an act consistent with a rumoured vote fraud scheme. The CEC had previously responded with a decision on 9 May banning the use of camera phones in voting booths. Among episodes of tension connected to the behaviour of party/candidate proxies or unauthorized persons, there were chaotic scenes at a polling station in TEC 29 when Prosperous Armenia representatives threatened the PEC and stole the ink pad used for the PEC stamp, causing voting to be temporarily suspended.

Counting mostly was conducted procedurally correctly, but in a number of of polling stations (6 per cent) where the IEOM observed counting the voters choice on the ballot was either not declared or shown to those present by the PEC chairperson, or the number of votes cast for contestants was not announced aloud. Nearly 20 per cent of PECs were observed to have difficulties compiling the protocols, and 8 per cent made significant procedural errors or omissions. In cases observed at TECs 13 (Erebuni, Yerevan), 19 (Vagharshapat), and 24, among others, PECs only completed protocols for the majoritarian when at the premises of the TEC, which is at best a lapse of procedure and at worst a way of facilitating results falsification. Deliberate falsification of results was directly observed at one polling station in TEC 16 (Masis), one in TEC 17 (Artashat) and two in TEC 29 (Spitak), where votes cast for smaller parties were redistributed to the piles of six major parties; a similar falsification was observed being attempted at a polling stations in TEC 11 (Shengavit, Yerevan) in the proportional contest and TEC 7 (Malatia-Sebastia, Yerevan), in the majoritarian contest. Security bags with ballots brought from one PEC were observed to have been opened when they were delivered to TEC 13.

While the IEOM does not have a complete impression of the results tabulation due to the slow rate of tabulation, although apparently within the legally prescribed timeframe, IEOM observers recorded procedural and technical errors. TECs should finish tabulation and reporting of results within 18 hours of

the end of voting, i.e. by 1400 hours on 13 May, and some informed IEOM observers that they would not begin tabulation procedures until 0600 hours.

*This statement is also available in Armenian.
However, the English version remains the only official document.*

MISSION INFORMATION & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The OSCE/ODIHR opened its election observation mission in Yerevan on 21 March 2007 with 15 experts and 29 long-term observers deployed in the capital and around the country. On election day, 411 short-term observers were deployed in an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM), including 59 observers from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), 32 from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and 13 from the European Parliament (EP). In total, there were observers from 44 OSCE participating States. The IEOM observed the voting in over 1,150 and counting in 110 polling stations throughout the country (out of 1,923 polling stations countrywide), the transfer of PEC results to TECs in 40 TECs and the tabulation of results in 30 TECs after polling stations closed.

Ms. Tone Tingsgaard (Sweden), Vice-President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and Head of the OSCE PA delegation, was appointed as Special Co-ordinator by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office to lead the OSCE short-term observers. Mr. Leo Platvoet (Netherlands) headed the delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and Ms. Marie Anne Isler Béguin (France) headed the delegation of the European Parliament. Ambassador Boris Frlec (Slovenia) is Head of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission.

The IEOM wishes to thank the authorities of the Republic of Armenia for the invitation to observe the elections, the Central Election Commission for providing accreditation documents, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other state and local authorities for their assistance and cooperation. The IEOM also wishes to express appreciation to the OSCE Office in Yerevan for their support throughout the mission, and resident embassies of OSCE participating States and other international institutions for their cooperation and support.

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