

## **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, the 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, the 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."

Marie Anne Isler Beguin, who headed the EP delegation, said: "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."

Ambassador Boris Frlec, the Head of the OSCE/ODIHR long-term mission, said: "Hopefully this election will contribute to restoring the trust of voters in the election process. 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 also 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.

*For further information, please contact:*

Klas Bergman, OSCE PA, tel.: +374 93 733 292, [klas@oscepa.dk](mailto:klas@oscepa.dk)

Urdur Gunnarsdottir, OSCE/ODIHR, tel.: +374 93 73 2 723, [urdur@odihr.pl](mailto:urdur@odihr.pl)

Bas Klein, PACE, tel.: +374 91 458 948, [bas.klein@coe.int](mailto:bas.klein@coe.int)

Pietro Ducci, European Parliament,

tel.: +374 94 711 828 [pietro.ducci@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:pietro.ducci@europarl.europa.eu)