



## **Armenian presidential election mostly in line with international commitments, but further improvements necessary**

YEREVAN, 20 February 2008 – Yesterday’s presidential election in Armenia was conducted mostly in line with the country’s international commitments, although further improvements are necessary to address remaining challenges, the International Election Observation Mission said in a statement published today.

The observers found that the Armenian authorities made genuine efforts to address shortcomings noted in previous elections. But there is a need for further improvements and political will to tackle concerns such as the lack of public confidence in the electoral process and the absence of a clear separation between State and party functions. The conduct of the count did not contribute to reduce suspicions among stakeholders.

“In an active and competitive election, Armenians turned out in strength to choose between genuine political alternatives. The problems we observed, particularly during the counting, must be addressed to increase overall confidence in the electoral process”, said Anne-Marie Lizin, OSCE PA Vice President and Special Co-ordinator of the OSCE short-term observers.

“While we noted improvements in the framework for these elections, problems with its implementation, especially during the vote count, in some cases undermined the trust of the people. In the end, the final choice lies in the hands of the Armenian people. Therefore, its trust in the electoral process is crucial to genuine democracy”, said John Prescott, the Head of the PACE delegation.

“Compared to the previous presidential elections, significant progress was noted with regard to the preparation and conduct of the electoral process. However, the whole electoral environment and reported interferences still have to be carefully assessed. The EU will continue to support the reinforcement of democracy in Armenia via its Neighbourhood Policy”, said Marie Anne Isler Béguin, Head of the European Parliament delegation.

“An election is not a one-day event, and today’s statement is a preliminary one. We will stay in Armenia to observe the completion of the tabulation process and the resolution of election disputes through the available mechanisms. This process should clarify aspects of the election that need further investigation”, said Ambassador Geert Ahrens, the Head of the ODIHR long-term election observation mission.

Close to 400 observers, including some 75 parliamentarians, 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).

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