

OSCE PA observers call Armenian election improved, but lacking competition

YEREVAN, 19 February 2013 – The 18 February Armenian presidential election demonstrated improvements over previous presidential elections but the limited field of candidates meant that the election was not genuinely competitive, concluded observers from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in a statement released today.

Important democratic freedoms, including the right to campaign freely, were generally respected during the campaign, observers said.

“This election showed improvement, but lacked genuine competition,” announced Tonino Picula, Head of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly election observation mission. “We are pleased to note progress on several aspects, but competition is critical if Armenia is going to live up to the aspirations of its people for a vibrant and engaging democracy.”

The campaign was generally conducted in a peaceful manner and was well-administered, according to the observers. Important measures of transparency have been implemented, said the observers, who also noted significant efforts to improve the voter registry. Nonetheless, the mission noted, particularly at local levels, an unclear distinction between the campaign activities of the incumbent and state structures. These included misuse of administrative resources and pressure on public employees to participate in the election and campaign events.

Media coverage enabled voters to inform themselves regarding the campaign. However, the decision by several influential political forces not to field candidates contributed to apathy and lack of trust among voters, said the observers.

The voting process was well organized in most of the polling stations visited, however the observers noted that the inking of passports did not provide the intended safeguard against multiple voting, as the ink could easily be wiped off.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe deployed a limited election observation mission to Armenia following an invitation from the Armenia authorities. This was the eighth observation mission deployed by the Assembly to Armenia since 1995.

For further information please contact:

- Director of Communications Neil Simon, Tel: +45 60108380, Email: neil@oscepa.dk,
- Deputy Secretary General Tina Schoen, Tel: +45 40304985
- Senior Advisor Andreas Baker, Tel: +374 91775349
- www.oscepa.org