

**PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY**

ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE

PRESS RELEASE**17 MARCH 1998****PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN ARMENIA**

A delegation of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly monitored the presidential elections in Armenia on 16 March 1998 at the invitation of the President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia. The delegation, which was led by Mrs. Tone Tingsgard, Member of Parliament of Sweden, included twelve parliamentarians from eight countries and two members of staff from the Turkish Parliament, and one from the US Congressional Helsinki Commission. Countries represented in the delegation include: the Czech Republic, France, Georgia, Italy, Norway, Poland, Sweden, and Turkey. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Delegation monitored the presidential elections in conjunction with the OSCE/ODIHR.

While in Armenia, the OSCE Parliamentary Delegation met with ten out of twelve registered presidential candidates, the President of the National Assembly, the Chairman of the Central Election Commission, the President of the Constitutional and the mass media. It was briefed extensively by the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission in Yerevan.

On election day, members of the delegation visited ten districts in and around Yerevan, and sixty-two polling stations, including their opening and closing.

The Delegation observes the multi-candidate character of the elections, which obviously is on the road towards democratic development. Taking into account the short period of time available for the preparation of the elections, the Delegation considers that the elections, in terms of performing at the polling stations visited, were generally not badly run, in spite of irregularities observed. It is the delegation's opinion that the presence of international observers contributes to a greater openness of the election process. It also believes that some improvement has been made in comparison with previous parliamentary and presidential elections held in 1995 and 1996.

At the same time the Delegation is aware that a number of violations of the rules and shortcomings in the procedure have also been recorded by other short-term observers. The joint statement of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the OSCE/ODIHR which is being issued simultaneously provides a more comprehensive analysis of the electoral process.

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