



## OSCE chiefs urge Armenian authorities and political parties to start credible process of electoral reform

YEREVAN, 22 July 2003 – Two leading OSCE representatives today expressed disappointment at the conduct of recent elections in Armenia and called on the authorities and political parties to commence a credible process of electoral reform to improve future votes, in line with OSCE commitments for democratic elections.

Giovanni Kessler, Vice President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and Special Representative of the Chairman in Office for the Armenian parliamentary elections and Ambassador Christian Strohal, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), delivered this message during a joint two-day follow-up visit to Yerevan.

“We urge the government and parliament to undertake the reforms that need to be made to the legislative and administrative framework for elections, particularly with regard to the method of forming election commissions and prompt publication of preliminary results broken down by polling station”, said Giovanni Kessler.

“Those responsible for violations during the recent elections must be held accountable to end the current atmosphere of impunity”, he stressed.

“Although the 25 May parliamentary elections showed improvement from the earlier presidential vote as regards the campaign and media, we are very disappointed that both elections again failed to meet OSCE commitments for democratic elections”, said Ambassador Strohal on the last day of his visit.

“We are grateful for the co-operation with the authorities and political parties during the recent elections and look forward to working together on this and other important areas of reform in the months ahead”, he added.

The ODIHR final report on the parliamentary elections, containing concrete recommendations for improving the electoral process in Armenia, will be published shortly.

During meetings with civil society, Ambassador Strohal stressed that NGOs have a vital role to play in the development of democracy. “Civil society should be viewed as a valuable partner in addressing issues of governance”, he said. “An excellent example is set by the planned creation of a civil society monitoring group for penitentiary institutions”. The delegation encouraged the Armenian authorities to take concrete steps on a number of human dimension issues including the independence of the judiciary, administrative and pre-trial detention and equal opportunities for women to participate in public and economic life.

For further information, please call:

- Jan Jooren, OSCE PA, Press Counsellor, +45 33 37 80 40
- Jens-Hagen Eschenbacher, ODIHR Spokesperson, +48603683122