



German Presidency of the Council of the European Union

670th Meeting of the Permanent Council

14 June 2007

Statement of the European Union in response to the Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan, Ambassador Vladimir Pryakhin

The European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Pryakhin back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his report and presentation.

We are pleased that his Office continues to enjoy good cooperation with the Armenian authorities and that this has enabled an expansion in the number of projects and an extension of their geographical reach. Given the increasing scope of the Office's activities, we continue to appreciate the attention paid to systematic prioritisation, balance in activity between the dimensions, coordination with the international community, especially the EU, and close cooperation with the authorities and civil society in defining and implementing programmes.

In our statement of 17 May the European Union welcomed the improved conduct of the 12 May parliamentary elections in Armenia. We commend the Office for its role in coordinating election related assistance ahead of the elections and welcome its intention to maintain this role for the Presidential elections in 2008. We also appreciate the plans to work closely with the Armenian Authorities and Central Election Commission to facilitate an electoral process in conformity with OSCE/ODIHR recommendations. The EU considers that, in tandem with the OSCE/ODIHR, the Office can make an important contribution to building on the positive momentum created by the May 2007 elections.

Many of the Office's other areas of focus in the human dimension will have a bearing on this effort. In particular, efforts to encourage the Armenian government to build on the reforms carried out in the areas of criminal justice reform, freedom of the media and access to information. The EU attaches great importance to the protection and promotion of human rights. We commend the Office for its human rights monitoring activities, especially with regard to the recent case of Levon Gulyan. The EU also strongly supports the Office's assistance to the Human Rights Defender's Office, including in its capacity to assist in the treatment of election related complaints. As with electoral assistance, we welcome the valuable role of the Office in coordinating other activities, including the fight against corruption. We note the many areas, such as anti-trafficking in human beings, where the Office is offering technical assistance to the Armenian authorities, and appeal to all political forces in Armenia to take full advantage of this expertise.

The EU continues to support the focus in the Economic and Environmental programme on sustainable economic development integrating environmental considerations, and Small and Medium Enterprises development. We remain interested to receive news of the Syunik Project Office's success in promoting socio-economic development, including through the community sustainable development strategies being developed and the new Business Incubator Centre in Goris. We attach importance to models of governance inclusive of all stakeholders, and therefore welcome the continued support of the Office to the 9 Aarhus Convention Centres.

In the political-military dimension the EU congratulates the Office in anticipation of the successful conclusion of the Melange destruction programme in August 2007; a project that has made an important contribution to first and second dimension security considerations. We appreciate the priority the Office attaches to police assistance activities and welcome the new areas of activity, in line with wider OSCE objectives, on public order management and organised crime. High public confidence in the law enforcement sector is essential in combating crime. We therefore encourage the Office to maintain its focus on assisting the democratisation efforts of the Armenian Police Service and also those of the armed forces in line with the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security.

Mr. Chairman, the European Union welcomes the steps undertaken by Armenia in recent years to advance political reform thereby contributing to our shared goals under the European Neighbourhood Policy. We believe the OSCE Office in Yerevan can make an important contribution to the continuation of this process, and look forward to further reports from the Office of good cooperation with the host government. We thank Ambassador Pryakhin and his staff for their hard work. As this is most likely going to be his last appearance before the PC in this capacity, we take the opportunity to wish him all the best in his new function.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia, EFTA countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.