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EMBASSY OF GEORGIA TO THE REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA
PERMANENT MISSION OF GEORGIA TO THE OSCE AND OTHER
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN VIENNA

S t a t e m e n t

of the Delegation of Georgia

at the 925th session of the OSCE Permanent Council

Vienna, October 15, 2012

Mr. Chairperson,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the delegation of Georgia I would like to inform the PC on the Parliamentary elections of October 1, 2012 in Georgia.

The pre-election period was quite intense and highly polarized as noted by many observers. It was characterized by active campaigning and the political parties had an ample opportunity to deliver their messages to the wider electorate. The televised debates enabled parties to address the population with their programmes and views on pertinent issues.

The elections were the most competitive in Georgia's recent history. The outcomes were hardly predictable until the release of the preliminary results by the Central Electoral Commission. Georgian Dream Coalition and United National Movement were two major contestants in the elections, although many more political parties participated.

Final tabulations and appeals are still ongoing, and will be reflected in overall assessment of the elections. However, it is already possible to say that the Georgian Dream coalition has acquired the majority in the new Parliament (54.9%), while the ruling United National Movement (UNM) party has acquired a large minority share of the Parliament seats (40.4%). No other political group managed to clear the 5% threshold required for endorsing candidates in the Parliament.

In a televised address on the next day of the elections, President Mikheil Saakashvili conceded the defeat of the UNM. At the same time, the President

pledged to contribute to a constitutional process of convening new Parliament and forming new government by the Georgian Dream coalition.

In order to ensure conduct of free and fair parliamentary elections following steps have been undertaken:

- Georgia requested early presence of international election observers. As early as April 2012, invitations were sent to ODIHR, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Council of Europe, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, the European Parliament, the GUAM and the BSEC Parliamentary Assembly, League of Arab states and African Union. Invitations were also extended to the International Republic Institute and the National Democratic Institute, the legislative bodies of the EU, NATO and GUAM member-states and other partners. As a result an unprecedented number of observers - more than 62 000 (1600 international and 61 000 local) - were monitoring the elections.

- To ensure balanced coverage of the elections by the broadcasting media, the Georgian side requested the EU to launch the media-monitoring project. The EU and the UNDP funded the project on pre-election media monitoring - "Professional Media Coverage for Elections".

An important initiative has been the adoption of the so called "Must Carry" rule. The rule obliged all cable operators to carry news-based TV channels, including the satellite broadcasters, while requiring all news-based TV channels to offer their signal to all cable operators.

- An Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) was established under the auspices of the National Security Council. The Task Force fostered coordination among various governmental agencies and promoted dialogue between the government and all stakeholders of the electoral process.

- A 21-member Commission, chaired by a member of an opposition party and with opposition and civil society representatives in the majority, conducted a door-to-door campaign and released verified and updated voter's list.

Today, I am happy to note that the ODIHR, OSCE parliamentary assembly, NATO Parliamentary Assembly, CoE, EU Parliament and other international observers assessed the elections as free and fair, as truly competitive and declared that the elections genuinely reflected the will of the Georgian people. The 2012 Parliamentary elections in Georgia proceeded in accordance with the OSCE commitments and the democratic standards. According to the international assessments, by conducting the successful, transparent and fair elections Georgia has passed an important democracy test.

The parliamentary elections have been a historic milestone in Georgia's democratic development, whereby the transfer of power has happened in a peaceful and democratic manner.

Now we all are looking ahead to creation of the new government and expecting the suggestions and recommendations of the election observers to further strengthen our democratic institutions and the process of elections.

Thank you.