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Human Dimension Implementation Meeting  
Working Session1,

Democratic Institutions

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As delivered by

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Ms. Moderator,

In this session my delegation would like to present efforts of adopting new Electoral code of Armenia through inclusive process bringing together all main stakeholders including Government, opposition and representative of civil society.

Initially, there were two key reference points which shaped this political and legislative process.

First, December 2015 the Constitutional Referendum endorsed new amendments which will reorganize semi Presidential system into Parliamentary one. Second, Armenia has invited the ODIHR to observe Constitutional referendum and there was a report of the ODIHR assessment team along with previous recommendations at the recent elections.

Strengthening public trust towards elections has been put high on the agenda of all recommendations. It became the main departure point of dialogue between the Government and the opposition parties. Later on this dialogue was informally institutionalized in the platform of 4+4+4 where 4 representatives from the government, opposition and civil society began assessing draft electoral code.

Certainly the Venice Commission and ODIHR through their joint opinions, which were sought twice throughout this process, contributed to the success of this endeavor.

First agreement was reached on June 16 and a joint document to this end was signed. However, as it turned out at the later stage this agreement was impossible to implement due to some technical or more correctly technological limitations related to the use of new electronic voting systems.

Despite this setback the inclusive process got resumed and on September 13 a new Electoral reform agreement was signed. This agreement meets the main requirement of the opposition parties.

It should be mentioned that our international partners welcomed this agreement and we thank them for their pledges to assist Armenia in technical implementation.

I would like to stress two points which seem essential in achieving this agreement.

First the process was very inclusive and brought together all main political parties and ensured participation of civil society.

Second, at certain stage it was possible to move beyond strictly legalistic interpretations and seek political solutions based on dialogue and necessity of building public trust towards new elections. This is particularly true for accommodating the proposal of publishing already signed voter lists. This has been a long debated issue since it introduced kind of dilemma between protecting privacy and gaining public trust. At the end of the day the choice was made in favour of public interests.

We look forward to the next year elections in order to consolidate trust, participation and dialogue in our society.

In conclusion, let me submit some recommendations which emanate from this practice.

First we invite participating states to closely cooperate with the Venice Commission and the ODIHR through seeking their joint opinion on the relevant legislation changes.

Second, we urge to conduct any legislation processes in inclusive manner through building platform among main stakeholders.

Thank you.