



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

2011 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Warsaw, 30 September 2011

Statement of the Georgian Delegation
Working Session 8: Democratic Elections

Dear Colleagues,

Let me, first of all, express our appreciation to the ODIHR, a leading actor in election observation for the assistance, it is continuously providing to the participating States, including Georgia, in order to conduct elections in compliance with OSCE commitments and international standards for democratic elections. We highly value your engagement in the reform process implemented by my Government.

Let me brief you on the electoral reform that the Government of Georgia has launched taking into consideration the recommendations provided by the ODIHR, the Venice Commission and other observer organizations. To reform election legislation and to increase confidence towards the Electoral Code and electoral environment through an inclusive, participatory and transparent process and through sustaining dialogue between political parties, a cross-party election working group (EWG) was established in 2009 with participation of parliamentary and non-parliamentary parties, relevant international organizations and NGOs. Consultations within EWG lasted for ten months. Based on the agreements reached, the parliament adopted amendments to the code, which embodied the direct election of Tbilisi mayor, new system of Tbilisi city council's composition, established the procedure of joint selection of Central Election Commission (CEC) chairman by opposition and majority parties, all Precinct Election Commission (PEC) secretaries appointed by opposition and extended timelines for appeals.

Taking into consideration the evident progress that the municipal elections of May 30, 2010 demonstrated, the EWG was re-launched in November 2010 in order to address the existing deficiencies, continue electoral reform and further improve the electoral environment. The process of drafting new election code is inclusive and 16 political parties participate in the process. In terms of transparency, embassies, international organizations and local non-governmental are invited to observe the group's meetings.

Additionally, the group has also agreed that it will proceed in three stages:

- a. Presentation stage - parties present their proposals on specific electoral issues in an agreed sequence.
- b. Discussion stage - the parties try to bring close their initial positions and seek consensus;
- c. Voting stage - the participating parties vote on specific issues and seek agreement.

As a result of long-lasting individual consultations, the ruling party and six opposition parties agreed on the following fundamental issues:

- The number of MPs will be increased from 150 to 190. Eighty-three MPs will be elected through the majoritarian system, while 107 MPs will be elected through the proportional system.
- A special Commission will be created to check and monitor voters list. The Commission will be composed with representatives of the government, opposition and NGOs based on parity principle. The Commission will be chaired by the representative of opposition. The Commission will have to conduct checking the voters list from October 1, 2011 till July 1, 2012.
- The election subject who will overcome 5 percent of electoral threshold will receive 1 million GEL from the state budget to cover the election campaign expenses, including 300 000 GEL for pre-election TV advertisements.
- The governmental Inter-Agency Task Force for Free and Fair Elections, whose activities during Local elections were assessed positively, will be created no later than July 1, 2012, approximately four months before the elections. The goal of the council will be to monitor the use of administrative resources and to react upon the violations of election rules.

An editorial group was formed within the parliament, aimed at drafting the new Election Code in line with reached agreements. The group is composed of representatives of all signatory parties. The Group already drafted the new code, which was submitted to the ODIHR and the Venice Commission for international expertise.

The new Election Code is scheduled to be adopted in October-November with the view to have one year prior to the next parliamentary elections to allow for efficient implementation. This will also address concerns expressed by international stakeholders on the need to avoid adoption of important legislation too close to election date.

At the end, let me reiterate that Georgia stresses the importance of democratic, free and fair elections in ensuring democratic governance, sustainable security and stability and is committed to ensuring democratic, transparent and inclusive electoral environment.

Thank you!