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## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Statement on Armenia's Television and Radio Law**

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
June 10, 2010

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

All participating States have undertaken commitments to respect and protect fundamental human rights such as freedom of the media and expression. These rights should be enshrined in the legislation of any participating State's reforms to its relevant legal framework on regulations affecting the operations of media in their societies. While we acknowledge the government of Armenia's ongoing efforts to convert their TV broadcasting from analogue to a digital format, we note and share with others concerns about the recent amendments to Armenia's Law on Television and Radio, and the likelihood that the amendments will reduce TV media pluralism as well as the Armenian public's access to diverse information and opinions.

We welcomed the legal review conducted by the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFOM) and presented to the Armenian government on May 25, and its recommendations on how to modify the initial draft legislation. Because transparency and good-faith consultations with affected stakeholders on media reforms are crucial to their ultimate success, we fully supported the RFOM's key recommendation that Armenia's National Assembly deputies convene a working group composed of representatives of journalistic non-governmental organizations, opposition parliamentarians, and others to work on a fundamental revision of the draft law, fully taking into account the remarks and suggestions of the working group members, as well as the recommendations of international organizations and their experts. The government's willingness to hold public consultations on the draft law is to be commended. However, the rushed legislative process unfortunately did not allow for the thorough public discussion that such important legislation merited.

While we welcome the fact that some changes were made to the legislation in line with the RFOM's recommendations, we note that a number of concerns and recommendations remain unanswered. For example, we note with concern that the amendments to the law will actually reduce the number of TV media able to broadcast in Armenia for some years, thereby restricting media pluralism.

In light of these concerns, we urge the Armenian government and National Assembly to further amend the legislation, taking into account the OSCE's recommendations, in order to make the legislation consonant with international standards and OSCE commitments and to do so in an inclusive and transparent manner.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.