



INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA, 12 MAY 2007

STATEMENT OF PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Yerevan, 13 May 2007 – The International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) for the 12 May parliamentary elections in Armenia is a joint undertaking of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and the European Parliament (EP).

This statement of preliminary findings and conclusions is delivered prior to the completion of the election process, including the tabulation and announcement of final results, the handling of possible post-election day complaints or appeals, and the installment into office of the newly elected members of the National Assembly.

The election is assessed in line with OSCE and Council of Europe commitments, other international standards for democratic elections and national legislation. The final assessment of the election will depend, in part, on the conduct of the remaining stages of the election process. The OSCE/ODIHR will issue a comprehensive final report, including recommendations for potential improvements, approximately two months after the completion of the election process. The PACE will present its report at its Standing Committee meeting on 24 May.

The institutions represented in the IEOM stand ready to continue to support the authorities and civil society of Armenia in the conduct of democratic elections.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

The 12 May 2007 elections for the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia demonstrated improvement and were conducted largely in accordance with OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and other international standards for democratic elections. The Armenian authorities and other actors in the electoral process took steps to address previous shortcomings, but were unable to fully deliver a performance consistent with their stated intention that the election would meet international standards, and some issues remained unaddressed.

The Election Code was considerably amended and improved since the 2003 parliamentary elections, and provides a good basis for the organization of genuinely democratic elections, although some shortcomings remain. The amended Election Code clarifies a number of ambiguities in the process as well as the legal consequences of non-compliance.

The election authorities generally worked efficiently in the pre-election period, and were technically well equipped and prepared for election day. Candidate registration was carried out by the Central Election Commission (CEC) and the Territorial Election Commissions (TECs) in an inclusive manner.

Other positive aspects of the pre-election process included:

- The CEC demonstrated ongoing efforts to enhance transparency of election procedures, such as a schedule of regular press briefings and the provision of key information on its website.
- Substantial training of election officials and voter education efforts took place.
- For the first time there was a central and computerized voter register. The police, as the responsible agency, took proactive measures (along with the CEC and others) to correct inaccuracies and involve the electorate in upgrading the voter list through telephone hotlines and advance publication of the voter list on the CEC website.
- There was visible and dynamic campaigning by many contestants in both the proportional and majoritarian contests, which took place in a permissive environment.
- There was extensive media coverage of the election, with an apparent effort to enable most parties and candidates to convey their messages, although largely devoid of critical viewpoints.
- Public media adhered to legal requirements concerning allocation of free airtime during the official campaign period.
- Women's representation in the electoral contest was improved in line with the amended Election Code providing that women should constitute at least 15 per cent of each proportional contest party/bloc list and be in at least every tenth position on the list.

However, the following issues raised concerns:

- Gaps remain in the regulatory framework for elections. Existing regulations to address important areas of the electoral process, such as early campaigning and issues of possible vote buying were not implemented. The intertwining at all levels of political and business interests is of concern, especially in view of relatively weak provisions and enforcement regarding transparency and disclosure of campaign finances.
- The mechanisms to regulate the election process and correct irregularities were mostly passive. Publicly identified concerns were generally not acted upon in the absence of formal complaints.
- The complaints and appeals process brought to light inconsistencies and contradictory elements in the legal framework.
- TEC leadership "troikas" (chairperson, deputy chairperson and secretary) were dominated by representatives of the Republican Party, Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) Dashnaktsutium and appointees of the President, which challenges the spirit of balanced composition as intended by Election Code provisions.
- The majoritarian contests were characterized by a low number of candidates – just under three per constituency on average. Seven out of 41 constituencies had only one candidate.
- The separation of the ruling party and the State appeared to be less than distinct in some important elements of the campaign, the most visible of which was the convergence of the election campaign of the Republican Party with a longer-running campaign celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of the Armenian Army, sponsored by the Ministry of Defense.
- Negative newspaper articles relating to private comments by an opposition leader, allegedly recorded surreptitiously, and subsequent public remarks by the president referring to those comments as a serious criminal act, introduced a negative element to the campaign environment.

Some violent incidents occurred during the campaign period, but they appear not to have significantly impacted upon the overall electoral environment.

On election day, voting took place in a mostly calm atmosphere. The conduct of voting was assessed positively in the vast majority of polling stations observed (94 per cent). Training of PEC members was evident with PECs generally following procedures, including the checking of voter identification. Domestic observers were present in 82 per cent of the polling stations. Some identified problems

included: unauthorized persons present in polling stations (17 per cent), overcrowding (14 per cent) and challenges to secrecy of voting due to the construct of voting booths (17 per cent).

Problems of an apparently more deliberate character emerged in some parts of the country. A few instances of tension due to the conduct of proxies or unauthorized persons were observed. People voting more than once were observed in two TECs and potential vote fraud schemes were identified in two cases.

Counting was mostly conducted according to procedures but in 17 per cent of polling stations observed the organizational requirements led to difficulties and consequently to an assessment of the counting as bad or very bad by IEOM observers. In a number of observations (6 per cent), the voter's choice on the ballot was either not declared, not shown to those present, or results for contestants not announced. Difficulties compiling protocols were observed in 20 per cent of PECs, and significant errors in 8 per cent. In at least three TECs, PECs completed protocols at the TEC premises, representing a lapse in procedure and the potential for results falsification. Deliberate falsification of results was observed at four polling stations, and an attempt in two polling stations.

While the IEOM does not have a complete impression of the results tabulation due to the slow rate of tabulation, although apparently within the legally prescribed timeframe, IEOM observers recorded procedural and technical errors.

Two issues of concern which did not impact on the election process itself were also noted by the IEOM:

The Armenian authorities' last-minute denial of visas to OSCE/ODIHR observers seconded by one OSCE participating State (Turkey) was not in line with the commitment in the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen document to invite election observers from any other OSCE participating State.¹

Prior to the elections, the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission (EOM) received criticism from State authorities, including in public written statements, that called into question both the veracity of its findings, and its methodology. The IEOM does not agree with such criticism and stands by the findings of the OSCE/ODIHR EOM third interim report.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Background

The 12 May 2007 elections were to elect 131 seats in the National Assembly (parliament). Members of the National Assembly are elected for five-year terms. Ninety seats are elected on the basis of a national proportional contest of party/bloc lists, and 41 by majoritarian contest in single-mandate constituencies. In the proportional contest, to win election a party must pass a threshold of 5 per cent of the valid vote, while a bloc must pass 7 per cent. In the majoritarian contests, the candidate polling the highest number of votes is the winner (first past the post).²

Previous elections in the Republic of Armenia in 2003, 1999, 1998, and 1996 have been assessed as falling short of OSCE commitments and other international standards for democratic elections.³

¹ OSCE Copenhagen Document, 1990, Art. 8: "They will therefore invite observers from any other [OSCE] participating State...to observe the course of their national election proceedings...".

² In cases where there is only one candidate, he or she must win more than 50 per cent of the valid vote.

³ For OSCE/ODIHR reports on previous elections in the Republic of Armenia (1996-2003), see <http://www.osce.org/odihr-elections/14350.html>

Changes in the political landscape affected the 2007 electoral competition. For this election, the Armenian Republican Party, ARF Dashnaktsutun and the United Labour Party did not enter the election as a coalition, although they were partners in government, while the Orinats Yerkir (Law-based State) Party left the government coalition in 2006. New political forces emerged, notably the Prosperous Armenia Party, while others fell into abeyance.

Prime Minister Andranik Margaryan, leader of the Republican Party, died suddenly on 25 March. Serge Sargsyan was named on 26 March to take on the party leadership functions, and on 4 April President Kocharyan appointed him as prime minister.

Legal Framework

The legislative framework for elections in Armenia consists mainly of the Constitution and the Election Code. The Code has been substantially amended since the 2003 National Assembly elections, and provides a good basis for the conduct of democratic elections. However, gaps remain in the regulatory framework for elections, and there were also failures to implement certain existing legislative provisions.

The Election Code guarantees State support and cooperation for campaigning on an equal basis. The formal campaign period begins after the registration of candidacies. The Code does not address what constitutes campaigning, and whether campaign activities or fundraising by election participants and third parties are permitted prior to the campaign period.

The CEC rejected a complaint against early campaigning brought by an NGO against Orinats Yerkir. The CEC found that the distribution of a leaflet constituted campaigning, but indicated that the absence of a clear prohibition on early campaigning, and constitutional protections for political expression and assembly, prevented it from concluding that there had been a violation.

The Constitution requires openness of political party and campaign finances, but deficiencies in disclosure, reporting and overall supervision were noted. The absence of clear prohibitions on early and indirect campaigning, and deficiencies in enforcing party and campaign finance regulations, leave scope for electoral contestants to exceed campaign finance limitations. This could subvert the intent of campaign finance limitations stipulated in the Election Code. The CEC has no competence to investigate whether a party/candidate has failed to disclose relevant financial transactions outside the campaign fund a contestant must established. Examination of the available 2006 financial reports of political parties by the OSCE/ODIHR EOM indicated that they lacked detail and could not serve as a sufficient basis for monitoring campaign finance. It is also questionable whether the reported amounts are accurate: for example, Prosperous Armenia reported that it had no income, expenditures or property at all in 2006.

The Election Code prohibits parties and candidates, during the official election campaign, from giving or promising goods and services to voters – commonly referred to as “vote buying”. The statutory provision does not appear to require specific intent to influence a voter to constitute a violation. The OSCE/ODIHR EOM directly observed one episode of provision of goods by a political party that met the legal definition of prohibited conduct in an election campaign. Generally, the legal prohibition was not enforced. The prosecutor-general informed the OSCE/ODIHR EOM that his office would act only in cases in which intent to influence voters could be demonstrated.

During the campaign period substantial attention in the media to government activities included a prominent focus on Prime Minister Sargsyan. The manner in which his public appearances around the country were presented by the media, not clearly differentiating between his roles as prime minister and leader of the Republican Party, appeared to confirm the difficulty in applying legal provisions concerning political campaigning by officials.

Election Administration

The election administration comprises the CEC, 41 TECs (corresponding to the 41 majoritarian constituencies), and 1,923 Precinct Election Commissions (PECs). The CEC and TECs are permanent bodies, while PECs were formed by 27 April. The amended Election Code provides for a more balanced composition of election commissions: one member is nominated by the president, one each by the six parliamentary factions and the “peoples’ deputy” group (deputies elected as non-partisan), and one “judicial servant”. There is a hierarchy of appointment, each representative on the CEC nominating one member to each TEC, who in turn nominated a member to each of the PECs under that TEC.

During the pre-election period the CEC made notable improvements in its efficiency and transparency of procedures. All necessary election preparations were made within the required timeframe. The CEC established a schedule of regular press briefings, and introduced on its website a chart on complaints it had considered. In accordance with amendments to the Election Code requiring publication of election results by precinct, the CEC introduced a networked computer system linking it to the TECs.

TECs appeared to be well prepared for the elections and generally to be working in a collegial manner. However, the TEC leadership “troikas” (chairperson, deputy chairperson and secretary), although elected by the TEC, were dominated by the representatives of the Republican Party, ARF Dashnaksutium and appointees of the President. This challenges the spirit of balanced composition as intended by Election Code provisions. In two TECs, members acknowledged that the Orinats Yerkir-appointed member had been removed from the TEC troika because that party was now in opposition. Influence of local self-government bodies over the work of TEC 17 (Artashat) and TEC 19 (Yeghednadzor) appeared to breach the provisions for independence stated in the Election Code.

PEC leadership “troikas” had a more diverse composition than TEC “troikas”. PECs were extensively trained for election day and provided with materials explaining election day procedures in detail. The CEC produced short TV films explaining election day procedures to voters, which were broadcast throughout the official campaign period.

Election code amendments enacted in 2005 charged the police with compiling a centralized and computerized voter register. For these elections, additional efforts were made by the police and CEC as well as by local community leaders, political parties and NGOs to correct inaccuracies (mainly surplus names and voters registered at incorrect addresses). The police and the CEC repeatedly called through the media for public cooperation to correct the voter list, which could be checked on the CEC website or at polling station premises, and errors then reported to election authorities or via police hotlines.

Candidate registration was inclusive. All twenty-four parties and one bloc that applied were registered by the CEC, and no individual candidate from any list was refused registration. After two parties withdrew their lists, twenty-two parties and one bloc were on the ballot for the proportional list contest. Of the 141 persons who submitted documents for registration as majoritarian candidates, 135 were registered by the TECs. Five withdrew before registration, and there was one refusal due to incomplete documentation. A small number of withdrawals after registration (commonly citing negligible prospects of winning), and two de-registrations (see below) resulted in a total of 119 candidates in the majoritarian contest – an average of just under three per constituency.

No party sought to field a candidate in every constituency (only the Republican Party attempted a countrywide presence). Most parties decided to concentrate resources instead on the proportional election. There were seven constituencies with only one candidate, and eleven with only two candidates. The majoritarian contests reflected local rather than nationwide political dynamics.

Complaints and Appeals

The Election Code permits appeals to the courts against actions (or inaction) of election commissions. The CEC and TECs have responsibility under the Code to review actions by subordinate election commissions. There was a discernible deficit in this regard due to evident passivity and lack of initiative by the electoral and other authorities responsible for upholding the regulatory framework, who stated that they would only take action upon receipt of a formal complaint.

While complaints received by the CEC were handled with overall transparency, some of its official responses (these were not characterized as “decisions”) were not sufficiently reasoned. For example, in response to a complaint by Orinats Yerkir that a mayor had breached the requirement for provision of state-owned premises as campaign venues free of charge, the CEC confirmed the definition of state property as central government and not local self-government property.⁴ However, this was contrary to practice already widely in evidence during the campaign.

A small number of complaints were filed with TECs, and none upheld. TEC and court decisions in some instances were arbitrary and inconsistent. A court ordered TEC 19 to deregister two candidates, on the basis of an application by a third candidate. However, another court rejected a complaint that TEC 39 should deregister a candidate (while not disputing the substance of the complaint) on the grounds that a rival candidate did not have competence to apply to court for a candidate’s deregistration.

The Election Code and provisions of the Civil Procedure Code on election-related disputes declare election-related first instance court decisions to be final and not subject to appeal, but in six decisions on complaints rendered on 3 May the court of first instance granted the right of appeal, citing different provisions of the Civil Procedure Code. Additionally, the constitutionality of Civil Procedure Code provisions has been challenged in the Constitutional Court.

Campaign Environment

In the official campaign period, vigorous campaigning by most parties and majoritarian candidates was discernible throughout the country. Municipal and community authorities, almost without exception, met their obligations to designate places for the display of campaign materials. Besides these designated spaces, and advertising on commercially rented installations, a permissive environment prevailed, with posters widely placed on public and private buildings and installations.

There was a flexible approach towards the formal procedure whereby, on the basis of requests received and forwarded by the TECs, municipal and community authorities should put venues for campaign meetings at the disposal of political parties and candidates on the basis of equality and free of charge. In instances where parties or candidates applied instead directly to the municipal and community authorities, this was apparently with the approval of the TECs. Most parties appeared to favour an approach of holding previously unannounced or short-notice rallies, without prohibitive action from the authorities.

Highly visible and prevalent publicity to commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of the Armenian Army, sponsored by the Ministry of Defense, was launched prior to and ran throughout almost the entire campaign period. This was mainly visible in Yerevan, where about half the electorate resides. At a late stage in the campaign, the Republican Party campaign converged with the Army’s anniversary campaign, with evident crossover of campaign messages and featured participants. The merging of the image of the party (whose leader was until recently the Minister of Defense) with the symbols and accomplishments of

⁴ Local Government Law, Art. 70.2

the armed forces was evident.⁵ As a result, the separation between the ruling party and the State appeared to be less than distinct.

The Russian-language newspaper *Golos Armenii* published two editorials negatively describing a conversation between an opposition party chairman and a diplomat, allegedly clandestinely recorded. The editorials contended that the opposition leader was seeking a negative assessment of the parliamentary elections by the international community. These events and subsequent public remarks by the president referring to the aforementioned comments as a serious criminal act, introduced an element of pressure into the election campaign environment.⁶ Although the authorities have yet to underscore that free expression and secrecy of private communication are protected by the Armenian Constitution, they have said that an investigation would be undertaken. Further information on the investigation is still pending.

Widely circulating and apparently speculative comments about activities in preparation for election fraud could indicate mistrust and cynicism among the electorate. A person working for a majoritarian candidate in TEC 25 was arrested for vote buying on 9 May. The OSCE/ODIHR EOM also heard allegations that some voters were under pressure to vote for certain parties or candidates, for fear of consequences such as job dismissal. A candidate (and incumbent deputy) from Syunik region confirmed that workers at a large enterprise he owned were obliged to vote for him, but he characterized this as consistent with contemporary global corporate management styles.

There were some violent episodes shortly before and during the official campaign period, but their connection to the elections, or to election rivalries, was unclear, and they did not appear to impact on the electoral environment countrywide.

Media Environment

The Election Code provides for airtime to all candidates based on “equal conditions”. Each registered party/bloc in the proportional contest was entitled to a maximum 60 and 120 minutes of free airtime and no more than 120 and 180 minutes of paid airtime on public television and radio respectively. The CEC allotted the sequence of appearances in free and paid airtime by lottery. Public media adhered to their obligations in a somewhat formalistic manner: public TV *HI* decided that all free campaign slots could be broadcast daily as a bloc, in the time period set by the CEC but outside primetime viewing.

Almost all parties and blocs used their free airtime. On 19 April a majoritarian independent candidate appeared during the free airtime allocated to a party. Instead of deregistering the party for breaching the Election Code prohibition on transfer of airtime to another contestant, the CEC issued a general warning.

The country’s leading private broadcasters offered to air paid political advertisements, while local TV stations limited paid spots mostly to majoritarian contests, if at all. The national broadcasters’ advertising rates were criticized as prohibitively expensive by a number of contestants, and were high when compared to regular commercial rates.

Political and electoral events were extensively reflected in newscasts and current affairs programmes in the broadcast media.⁷ Many media outlets tried to cover a broad range of political subjects, and thus to

⁵ This runs contrary to OSCE commitments. See OSCE Copenhagen Document, 1990, Art. 5: “[A]mong those elements of justice which are essential to the full expression of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all human beings [is]” [... Art. 5.4]: “a clear separation between the States and political parties; in particular, political parties will not be merged with the State”.

⁶ OSCE Copenhagen Document, 1990, Art. 7.7: “[The participating States will] ensure that law and public policy work to permit political campaigning to be conducted in a fair and free atmosphere in which neither administrative action, violence nor intimidation bars the parties and the candidates from freely presenting their views...”

⁷ The OSCE/ODIHR EOM monitored seven television station, two radio stations and four newspapers, using quantitative and qualitative analysis, from 22 March through 10 May: *HI* (public-service broadcaster), *ALM TV*, *Armenia TV*, *H2*,

comply with legal provisions requiring equal conditions. Most monitored TV channels, however, devoted the highest portion of political information in newscasts to the government and to the Republican Party, the ARF Dashnaktsutiun and Prosperous Armenia.

The two public broadcasters (*HI* television and *Public Radio*) mostly guaranteed access to the media for contestants. *Public Radio* offered balanced political coverage (both in time and tone). *HI* covered a number of political subjects, with the government accounting for the highest portion (21 per cent of predominantly neutral and positive coverage). It was also the only broadcaster to pay most attention to the opposition Armenian People's Party (12 per cent). However, coverage of Orinats Yerkir questioned the channel's objectivity – *HI* was the only television channel to present the first *Golos Armenii* editorial (see above) verbatim in its main news programme. Later it aired at least twice the president's public remarks referring to the party chairman's private comments. Notwithstanding the editorial freedom to inform the public about these events, *HI* did not meet the basic journalistic standard of presenting a response from Orinats Yerkir.

The four nationwide TV channels – *HI* and the private channels *H2*, *Armenia TV* and *ALM TV* provided extensive coverage of the government (with 26 per cent on *H2*). All monitored private broadcasters dedicated most of their political news to the Republican Party (*ALM TV* and *Armenia TV*), Prosperous Armenia (*H2*, *Shant TV* and the highest portion in *Kentron TV*), or ARF Dashnaktsutiun (*Yerkir Media*). This coverage was positive and devoid of critical comment.

Television coverage of the elections presented overtly positive and neutral information, minimizing any critical viewpoints. Only radio stations, mainly RFE/Radio Liberty, broadcast critical viewpoints voiced by different contestants and voters. The print media displayed a diversity of views, including critical views, although no single media source could be relied upon to present balanced coverage.

The media generally respected a silence period that started 24 hours prior to the election day.

Participation of Women

Women are under-represented in political or public life in Armenia. In the outgoing government, one of sixteen ministers is a woman, and seven of 131 deputies in the outgoing parliament are women.

The amended Election Code requires the inclusion of 15 per cent women for party/bloc lists in the proportional contest (as compared with 5 per cent in 2003), and in at least every tenth position in the lists. However, of the 119 candidates contesting the 41 majoritarian seats, only five were women (running in three constituencies). The visibility of female candidates in the electoral campaign was low.

There are very few women in the election administration: two of nine CEC members, 15 per cent of TEC members and only three of 41 TEC chairpersons are women. Eleven TECs are all male. At PEC level, women are better represented: EOM observers reported 38 per cent women as members of PECs, including 23 per cent as chairpersons.

Domestic and International Observers

Fifty-two domestic observation groups observed election day. The CEC refused accreditation to ten NGOs, mainly because they did not meet the requirement that relevant activities were included in their statute, and deregistered one on the grounds that it violated the provision of non-partisanship.⁸ Domestic observers were present in 82 per cent of polling stations visited by the IEOM during voting and during 89

Kentron TV, Shant TV, Yerkir Media (TV channels); *Public Radio, RFE/Radio Liberty* (radio stations); *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* (State-funded), *Aravot, AZG, Haykakan Zhamanak* (newspapers).

per cent of counts. In addition to international organizations represented in the IEOM, the CEC accredited observers from the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States and its Inter-parliamentary Assembly.

A recent amendment to the Election Code limits access by international organizations wishing to observe elections in Armenia: the amendment requires that international organizations must be explicitly invited by one of the state bodies (the President, National Assembly, Government and CEC).

Election Day and Vote Count

On election day, voting took place in a mostly calm atmosphere. The conduct of voting was evaluated as very good or good in 94 per cent of polling stations. In many cases where it was assessed as problematic this was due to overcrowding (14 per cent) and the maintenance of conditions for secrecy of voting with the open-front voting booths (deficiencies in this regard were observed in 17 per cent of polling stations). Overcrowding – largely a consequence of challenging conditions at premises available to serve as polling stations, and poor weather in some parts of the country meaning that voters were unwilling to wait outside – caused one PEC in TEC 30 (Vanadzor) to close the polling station some 30 minutes early, denying the possibility to vote to people who were waiting. Unauthorized persons were present in 17 per cent of polling stations.

Problems of an apparently deliberate character were observed in TECs concentrated in parts of Aragatsotn, Armavir, Ararat, Gegharkunik, Lori and Vayots Dzor regions, leading to a higher prevalence of IEOM observers' negative assessments. People voting more than once were observed in polling stations in TECs 23 (Sevan) and 31 (Vanadzor-Alaverdi); an attempt by the PEC to conceal the same activity at a polling station in TEC 39 (Vayots Dzor) was observed. Outside one polling station in TEC 31 IEOM observers saw people having what appeared to be a false data page (including photograph) inserted into their passports, suggesting preparation for voter impersonation fraud. Vote buying was observed at another polling station in the same constituency. In a polling station in TEC 4 (Arabkir, Yerevan) a voter was observed taking a photograph of his marked ballot with his cellphone, an act consistent with a rumoured vote fraud scheme. The CEC had previously responded with a decision on 9 May banning the use of camera phones in voting booths. Among episodes of tension connected to the behaviour of party/candidate proxies or unauthorized persons, there were chaotic scenes at a polling station in TEC 29 when Prosperous Armenia representatives threatened the PEC and stole the ink pad used for the PEC stamp, causing voting to be temporarily suspended.

Counting mostly was conducted procedurally correctly, but in a number of of polling stations (6 per cent) where the IEOM observed counting the voters choice on the ballot was either not declared or shown to those present by the PEC chairperson, or the number of votes cast for contestants was not announced aloud. Nearly 20 per cent of PECs were observed to have difficulties compiling the protocols, and 8 per cent made significant procedural errors or omissions. In cases observed at TECs 13 (Erebuni, Yerevan), 19 (Vagharshapat), and 24, among others, PECs only completed protocols for the majoritarian when at the premises of the TEC, which is at best a lapse of procedure and at worst a way of facilitating results falsification. Deliberate falsification of results was directly observed at one polling station in TEC 16 (Masis), one in TEC 17 (Artashat) and two in TEC 29 (Spitak), where votes cast for smaller parties were redistributed to the piles of six major parties; a similar falsification was observed being attempted at a polling stations in TEC 11 (Shengavit, Yerevan) in the proportional contest and TEC 7 (Malatia-Sebastia, Yerevan), in the majoritarian contest. Security bags with ballots brought from one PEC were observed to have been opened when they were delivered to TEC 13.

While the IEOM does not have a complete impression of the results tabulation due to the slow rate of tabulation, although apparently within the legally prescribed timeframe, IEOM observers recorded procedural and technical errors. TECs should finish tabulation and reporting of results within 18 hours of

the end of voting, i.e. by 1400 hours on 13 May, and some informed IEOM observers that they would not begin tabulation procedures until 0600 hours.

*This statement is also available in Armenian.
However, the English version remains the only official document.*

MISSION INFORMATION & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The OSCE/ODIHR opened its election observation mission in Yerevan on 21 March 2007 with 15 experts and 29 long-term observers deployed in the capital and around the country. On election day, 411 short-term observers were deployed in an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM), including 59 observers from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), 32 from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and 13 from the European Parliament (EP). In total, there were observers from 44 OSCE participating States. The IEOM observed the voting in over 1,150 and counting in 110 polling stations throughout the country (out of 1,923 polling stations countrywide), the transfer of PEC results to TECs in 40 TECs and the tabulation of results in 30 TECs after polling stations closed.

Ms. Tone Tingsgaard (Sweden), Vice-President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and Head of the OSCE PA delegation, was appointed as Special Co-ordinator by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office to lead the OSCE short-term observers. Mr. Leo Platvoet (Netherlands) headed the delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and Ms. Marie Anne Isler Béguin (France) headed the delegation of the European Parliament. Ambassador Boris Frlec (Slovenia) is Head of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission.

The IEOM wishes to thank the authorities of the Republic of Armenia for the invitation to observe the elections, the Central Election Commission for providing accreditation documents, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other state and local authorities for their assistance and cooperation. The IEOM also wishes to express appreciation to the OSCE Office in Yerevan for their support throughout the mission, and resident embassies of OSCE participating States and other international institutions for their cooperation and support.

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