



Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

# GEORGIA

## PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 2012

### OSCE/ODIHR NEEDS ASSESSMENT MISSION REPORT

11 – 15 June 2012



Warsaw  
3 July 2012

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**GEORGIA**  
**PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 2012**

**OSCE/ODIHR NEEDS ASSESSMENT MISSION REPORT**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

On 5 April 2012, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia extended an early invitation to the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) to observe parliamentary elections anticipated to take place in October 2012. The OSCE/ODIHR undertook a Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) to Tbilisi from 11 to 15 June 2012. The OSCE/ODIHR NAM included Ms. Tatyana Bogushevich, OSCE/ODIHR Senior Election Adviser, Mr. Richard Lappin, OSCE/ODIHR Election Adviser, and Mr. Roberto Montella, Deputy Director for Field Operations of the International Secretariat of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

The purpose of the mission was to assess the pre-election environment and the preparations for the parliamentary elections. Based on this assessment, the NAM was to recommend whether to deploy an OSCE/ODIHR election-related activity for the forthcoming elections, and if so, what type of activity best meets the identified needs. Meetings were held with officials from state institutions, the election administration, as well as with representatives of political parties, media, civil society, and international community. A list of meetings is annexed to this report.

The OSCE/ODIHR is grateful to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia for its assistance and co-operation in organizing the visit. The OSCE/ODIHR would also like to thank all of its interlocutors for taking the time to meet with the NAM.

**II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In line with the 2010 constitutional amendments, the next parliamentary elections are due to take place in October 2012 and are to be set by the President at least 60 days before elections. The new parliament will have considerably increased authority. The constitutional amendments reduce the powers of the President in favour of the prime minister and the government, having shifted the political system towards a more parliamentary one.

The upcoming elections will be held under a revised legal framework, including a new Election Code, which was adopted following an overall inclusive legislative review process. While the new Code provided improved regulation on a number of issues and reflected several long-standing OSCE/ODIHR recommendations, it did not address the existing inequalities in the size of electoral districts, which undermine the principle of equality of suffrage.

The 150-member parliament will be elected for a four-year term; 77 members will be elected under a list-based proportional system and another 73 in single-mandate constituencies. The new Code provides that apart from political parties and blocs, elections in majoritarian districts can also be contested by independent candidates.

Elections will be administered by a three-tiered structure of election commissions. A number of OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors considered the election administration to be the

strongest element of the electoral process and deemed it capable of managing elections in a professional and impartial manner.

In contrast to previous practice, voter lists for the upcoming elections will be prepared by a special Commission for Ensuring Voter List Accuracy. This Commission was established as part of a political agreement between the government and the opposition. Interlocutors appeared overall confident in the ability of the Commission to compile good quality voter lists and assessed this step as having the potential to enhance public confidence. At the same time, stakeholders did not have a uniform understanding of procedures used by the Commission and of its decision-making authority. Some questions were also raised regarding the potential impact of a parallel voter list verification effort. Nevertheless, interlocutors shared an impression that the quality of lists has overall improved over the last years, despite persisting concerns related to records of voters abroad.

The pre-electoral environment was characterized as polarized. Although the election date has not yet been set, the campaign is widely perceived to have already started. While political parties have not yet developed comprehensive programmes, issues such as education, healthcare, employment, and social welfare are expected to be the main focus of the campaign. Some OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed concern with potential misuse of administrative resources during the upcoming elections and alleged intimidation of opposition parties' supporters in the regions. In this regard, most interlocutors welcomed the establishment of an Inter-Agency Task Force, which is mandated to consider allegations of election-related violations and to issue recommendations on necessary corrective measures.

Recent amendments to the Law on Political Unions of Citizens, while aimed at ensuring better regulation and transparency of political party and campaign finances, resulted in criticism, mostly due to the broad discretionary authority that was granted to the newly designated oversight body, the State Audit Service (SAS). A number of cases launched by the SAS to investigate the legality of one individual's spending, the interviewing methods used, and the sanctions imposed resulted in accusations of it applying a selective and excessively rigid approach.

The media environment was characterized by many OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors as polarized and aligned along political or owners' interests. They expressed concerns with the lack of balance in reporting and limited coverage by the main broadcasters of activities of the opposition. On a positive note, many welcomed the adoption of the media transparency law as having resulted in greater transparency and accessibility of information on media ownership.

Civil society organizations are planning to undertake a number of activities aimed at both supporting and monitoring the upcoming elections, including observation of the pre-electoral process, deployment of observers on election day, monitoring the work of district-level commissions, and establishment of hotlines and information websites.

All interlocutors welcomed and strongly encouraged an observation activity by the OSCE/ODIHR in connection with the upcoming elections. The importance of observation of the pre-electoral period and a geographic spread to cover all regions of the country were highlighted. The OSCE/ODIHR NAM recommends that an Election Observation Mission (EOM) be deployed to observe these elections. In addition to the deployment of a core team of experts, the OSCE/ODIHR will request participating States to second 28 long-term and 350 short-term observers.

### III. FINDINGS

#### A. BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

In line with the 15 October 2010 constitutional amendments, the next parliamentary elections are due to take place in October 2012 and are to be set by the President at least 60 days before election day. The new parliament will have considerably increased authority. The constitutional amendments reduced the powers of the President in favour of the prime minister and the government, thus shifting the political system towards a more parliamentary one. The new Constitution will enter into force upon the inauguration of the next president.<sup>1</sup> Once it is in force, the government is to resign to allow the parliament elected in 2012 to form the new government.

In the 2008 parliamentary elections, the governing United National Movement (UNM) gained the majority of mandates (119) in the 150-seat parliament. The United Opposition, which represented a range of opposition political parties and figures, gained 17 mandates. However, in protest against alleged violations in the conduct of the elections, most of them refused to take up their seats. In addition, the Christian Democratic Movement and the Labor Party each gained six mandates, and the Republican Party two.

The OSCE/ODIHR last observed an electoral process in Georgia in 2010. It concluded that the 2010 municipal elections “marked evident progress towards meeting OSCE commitments and other international standards for democratic elections. However, significant shortcomings remained including deficiencies in the legal framework, its implementation, an uneven playing field, and isolated cases of election-day fraud.” It was also noted that “the authorities and the election administration made clear efforts to pro-actively address problems. Nevertheless, the low level of public confidence [...] persisted.”<sup>2</sup>

Since the last elections, a new figure has emerged on the political arena. A prominent businessman and billionaire, Mr. Bidzina Ivanishvili, declared in 2011 his intention to stand in upcoming parliamentary and next year’s presidential elections. In May 2012, he registered a party, Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia, which formed a larger coalition with several other opposition parties. Mr. Ivanishvili’s entry into politics was accompanied by a widely publicized controversy related to the revocation of his Georgian citizenship, which was widely perceived as an attempt to prevent him from standing in upcoming elections. On 22 May 2012, in a reported effort to demonstrate adherence to inclusive political processes and to avoid further escalation of tension, the parliament adopted a constitutional amendment that paved the way for Mr. Ivanishvili’s candidacy.<sup>3</sup> During meetings with the OSCE/ODIHR NAM, representatives of Mr. Ivanishvili’s campaign and other stakeholders spoke critically of the amendment as altering the fundamental law of the country for the sake of one person.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the 2010 constitutional amendments, the next presidential election is due to take place in October 2013.

<sup>2</sup> See OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission’s Final Report on 30 May 2010 municipal elections, p. 1, at [www.osce.org/odihr/elections/71280](http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/71280).

<sup>3</sup> The Constitution now grants the right to stand in the 2012 parliamentary and 2013 presidential elections to Georgian-born European Union citizens, who lived in Georgia for the five years preceding elections.

A serious concern expressed by a number of OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors related to the work of the judiciary. A low level of trust in the court system persists, which results in reported reluctance on the part of stakeholders to pursue legal avenues for seeking redress.<sup>4</sup>

## **B. LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

The upcoming elections will be regulated by a new Election Code, which was adopted in December 2011 following several months of discussions in the framework of a multi-party working group. According to the legislators, out of 16 political parties that took part in the working group, 6 opposition parties signed an agreement with the governing UNM on the package of amendments at the end of the process. Several opposition parties that the OSCE/ODIHR NAM met with expressed dissatisfaction that a number of their proposals were not taken on board and criticized the overall approach to law-making as being guided by political circumstance. However, the majority of the OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors welcomed the inclusiveness of the legislative review process, which was also open to input from civil society.

The OSCE/ODIHR and the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) of the Council of Europe published a Joint Opinion on the draft Election Code in December 2011.<sup>5</sup> Both organizations welcomed the adoption of a new Code, as recommended previously by the OSCE/ODIHR, and commended the authorities for having finalized the Code in advance of the upcoming elections. They also concluded that the draft included the necessary elements for administering elections and addressed several previous recommendations. Most significantly, the Code allowed independent candidates to run for all types of election, included narrower restrictions on voting rights of prisoners, reduced residency and support signature requirements, clarified signature verification procedures, and included additional fair trial and due process requirements. In a welcome development, the Code provides incentives for political parties to include women as candidates in party lists.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, some previous recommendations remained unaddressed. Of particular concern are the considerable differences in the size of single-mandate districts, which undermine the principle of equality of suffrage, as well as provisions allowing political officials to campaign while conducting their official duties and permitting the use of administrative resources as long as they are accessible to all contestants.

Apart from the Election Code, the Law on Political Unions of Citizens has also undergone considerable revision in late December 2011. The broad majority of amendments concerned political party and campaign financing and were aimed at improving transparency, oversight, and enforcement mechanisms, in line with previous OSCE/ODIHR and Council of Europe Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) recommendations.<sup>7</sup> The most important changes included a ban on donations by legal entities, an increase of the ceiling for private donations, the designation of the State Audit Service (SAS) as the responsible body to oversee

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<sup>4</sup> While recognizing the existence of a problem in this regard, the authorities informed the OSCE/ODIHR NAM that, according to recent surveys, public trust in the judicial system is gradually increasing.

<sup>5</sup> Joint OSCE/ODIHR and Venice Commission Opinion on the draft new Election Code of Georgia, 19 December 2011, available at [www.osce.org/odihr/86401](http://www.osce.org/odihr/86401).

<sup>6</sup> The inclusion of two women in each 10 places on candidate lists will result in a 10 per cent increase of state funding that a party receives.

<sup>7</sup> See *op.cit.* OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission's Final Report on 30 May 2010 municipal elections, p. 27, and the Council of Europe's GRECO Evaluation Report on Georgia on transparency of party funding (Greco Eval III Rep (2010) 12 E; Theme II) available at [www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int).

political party and campaign finances, introduction of a requirement for weekly reporting by contestants during an election period, and the merging of political party and campaign finance accounts.

Notwithstanding the positive aspects of the changes, the amended law came under strong criticism predominantly due to the broad discretionary authority that it granted to the SAS.<sup>8</sup> Following the criticisms, the law was amended again in May 2012 with considerable input from civil society. Nevertheless, many OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors considered that further adjustments were still needed (see Campaign Environment). Civil society representatives also expressed concerns with regard to a new provision in the Criminal Code stipulating a maximum punishment of three years of imprisonment for accepting gifts or other inducements, even during non-election periods. The provision was widely regarded as excessive.

### C. ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Under the new Election Code, the parliament consists of 150 members serving a four-year term; 77 members are elected under a list-based proportional system in one nationwide constituency, and another 73 are elected in single-mandate constituencies. To qualify for the allocation of proportional seats, parties and blocs must receive at least five per cent of valid votes. In the majoritarian contests, the candidate who receives the highest number of votes, but not less than 30 per cent of votes cast, is elected. If no candidate receives the required plurality, a second round is held between the two candidates who received the highest number of votes.

With a view to enhancing the role of the opposition in the work of the parliament, the new Election Code provides a possibility for a political party or bloc that clears the threshold, but gains less than six seats – the amount necessary to form a parliamentary fraction – to receive additional seats to enable it to establish a fraction.<sup>9</sup>

The new Election Code provides that apart from registered political parties and blocs elections in majoritarian districts can also be contested by independent candidates put forward by initiative groups of at least five members. To be registered, independent candidates need to pay an electoral deposit and to submit at least one per cent of support signatures of voters from the respective electoral district.<sup>10</sup>

The right to vote is granted to citizens of 18 years of age. Following the 2010 constitutional amendments, the age requirement for candidates was reduced from 25 to 21 years.

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<sup>8</sup> The UN Special Rapporteur has noted in a statement of 13 February 2012 that “the law gives extraordinary discretionary authority to the Chamber of Control to decide, in its own state of mind and without substantiating its decisions, and without clear criteria or possibility to appeal the decision [...]”. The statement is available at [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org).

<sup>9</sup> The Code stipulates that proportional seats are first allocated by multiplying the total number of votes received by a particular party by the total number of proportional seats, 77, and then dividing the result by the total number of votes received by all electoral subjects. In case any of the 77 seats remain undistributed, such seats are allocated to parties that cleared the threshold but received less than 6 mandates. If after this step there are still parties or blocs that overcame the threshold, but received less than 6 seats, missing mandates will be deducted one by one from the results of top-scoring parties.

<sup>10</sup> Political parties not represented in the parliament and not receiving state funding are required to submit 25,000 support signatures in order to register for an election.

## D. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The overall structure and the principles of formation of the election administration remain unchanged since the 2010 municipal elections.<sup>11</sup> The upcoming elections will be administered by a three-tiered election administration comprising the Central Election Commission (CEC), 73 District Election Commissions (DECs) and some 3,800 Precinct Election Commissions. Election commissions at all levels have 13 members each, 7 of which are appointed by political parties that qualify for state funding.<sup>12</sup>

Under the new Election Code, the CEC is no longer in charge of some of the challenging and potentially controversial activities it was previously responsible for, including compilation of voter lists, media monitoring, and campaign finance oversight. The CEC chairperson expressed satisfaction that these functions were delegated to other bodies, allowing the CEC to focus on the organizational side of elections.

Several OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors considered the election administration as the strongest element of the electoral process. The majority of interlocutors stated overall trust in the CEC and in subordinate election commissions and deemed the election administration capable of managing elections in a professional and impartial manner. Several interlocutors particularly underlined the efforts by the CEC chairperson to further strengthen the CEC as an institution and to enhance public confidence through openness and dialogue. A number of working groups targeted at different stakeholders, including political parties, civil society, and media, are convened by the CEC.

To address shortcomings identified in the dispute resolution process, the CEC, with support from International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), developed a manual offering practical guidance to both election commissions and potential complainants on how to prepare, lodge, and review complaints. A number of voter education activities are planned, including those targeted at national minorities, women, and voters with disabilities.<sup>13</sup> The CEC is also working on developing recommendations for local public administrations with regard to the placement of election materials and also on practical aspects of voting by prisoners. It is also planning to initiate the signing of a memorandum of understanding between all contestants on the issue of administrative resources.

## E. VOTER REGISTRATION

In contrast to previous practice, voter lists for the upcoming elections will be prepared by a special Commission for Ensuring Voter List Accuracy, which was instituted as part of a political agreement between the government and the opposition. It is chaired by a representative of an opposition party and comprises seven representatives each of political parties, government and civil society. Under law, it is tasked to verify and compile voter lists for the upcoming elections and has the final authority and responsibility for their content.

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<sup>11</sup> See *op.cit.* OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission's Final Report on 30 May 2010 municipal elections, pp. 6-8, for details on the composition of the election administration.

<sup>12</sup> These are parties that received at least 4 per cent of votes in previous parliamentary elections or at least 3 per cent of votes in local elections. Currently, 16 parties qualify for state funding. Since the Election Code stipulates that only 7 members of commissions will be appointed by political parties, the 7 parties that receive the highest funding qualify to appoint members of commissions.

<sup>13</sup> According to the CEC, voter lists, ballots, manuals and information materials will be translated in minority languages. A door-to-door campaign is planned to identify locations where disabled voters might be voting to facilitate their participation.

The Commission has trained nearly 12,000 staff to conduct a door-to-door verification using the voter lists provided by the CEC as of November 2011 as the basis. Discrepancies, mistakes and omissions revealed are verified in conjunction with the Civil Registry Agency (CRA) of the Ministry of Justice. The Commission plans to complete the verification by 1 August. After this date voter lists will be made available for public scrutiny, including on the Internet. In addition, a telephone hotline and SMS verification service will be launched.

Sharing preliminary observations about its work, the Commission stated that among the challenges it faces are difficulties related to the identification of voters abroad and the lack of an address system. The CRA acknowledged that the problem persists with regard to addresses, but emphasized that efforts had been undertaken in introducing an address system for Tbilisi and over 200 large villages for the upcoming elections. The CRA also informed the OSCE/ODIHR NAM of steps made in removing records of deceased persons and in streamlining the procedures for the compilation of voter lists abroad by having designed an online consular registration system.

The OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors appeared overall confident about the ability of the Commission to compile good quality voter lists and believed that it has sufficient competence, resources, and time to perform the task. Many saw this inclusive process as a means to enhance public confidence in the voter lists, although interlocutors did not have uniform understanding of exact procedures used by the Commission and of its decision-making authority. Importantly, interlocutors shared an impression that the quality of lists has improved over the last years and some believed that the remaining perception of there being serious problems with voter lists was bigger than the actual problems. Some political party and civil society representatives, however, remained concerned with potential manipulations on election day with records of voters abroad.

Apart from the work of the Commission, another large-scale voter list verification effort is being undertaken by the organization 'League of Voters', which plans to share the outcomes of its work with the Commission for its consideration. Some interlocutors raised concerns that the conduct of several parallel verification efforts would cause confusion and reluctance to engage from the side of the public.

## **F. CAMPAIGN ENVIRONMENT AND CAMPAIGN FINANCE**

The pre-electoral environment was characterized by most OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors as polarized. Although the date of elections has not yet been set, the campaign is widely perceived to have already started. Political parties have not yet developed comprehensive programmes; however, issues such as education, healthcare, employment, agriculture, and social welfare are expected to become the main focus of the campaign. Direct contact with the voters was regarded by the majority of parties met by the OSCE/ODIHR NAM as the most effective campaign method.

Some interlocutors expressed concern with regard to the potential misuse of administrative resources during the upcoming elections and alleged intimidation of supporters of opposition parties in the regions. In this regard, the majority of interlocutors welcomed the establishment of an Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF). The IATF is composed of high-level officials and mandated under law to consider complaints or allegations of election-related violations and to

issue recommendations on corrective measures. The IATF has already made several statements in connection with the upcoming elections.

Significant public attention in recent months has been directed at the work of the SAS. It has been accused of applying a selective and excessively rigid approach due to the number of cases it launched to investigate the legality of spending by Mr. Ivanishvili, the Georgian Dream Coalition, and structures perceived as affiliated with him, the interviewing methods used, and the penalties imposed. During the OSCE/ODIHR NAM, many interlocutors were particularly critical of a multi-million fine that Mr. Ivanishvili was ordered by the court to pay in connection with one case investigated by the SAS. While recognizing the need for tight control over party finances, many considered the fines that the SAS may levy under the law as excessive.<sup>14</sup>

In a meeting with the OSCE/ODIHR NAM, the SAS recognized the need for more detailed provisions as regards its authority and operational procedures. It is already working on guidelines aimed at evolving into more of a regulatory and advisory rather than punitive body. At the same time it has emphasized that it is guided solely by rule of law principles and requirements of the law. It also underlined that it scrutinizes activities and reports of all political parties.

## G. MEDIA FRAMEWORK

Television remains the primary source of information, while only three broadcasters, the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB), and two private channels, *Rustavi 2* and *Imedi*, have nationwide coverage. The latter two are widely perceived as supportive of the government. The coverage of three smaller private channels, *Kavkazia*, *Maestro*, and a new *Channel 9*, which are regarded as pro-opposition, is mostly limited to Tbilisi.

The media environment was characterized by OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors as polarized and aligned along political or owners' interests. Many interlocutors expressed concerns with the lack of balance in reporting and limited coverage of opposition activities by the main broadcasters. In this regard, the majority of interlocutors, including the broadcasters themselves, assessed positively the impact of an ongoing European Union (EU) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) media monitoring effort, the results of which are presented on a weekly basis on GPB. Another IFES-supported media monitoring effort is due to be launched in coming weeks.<sup>15</sup> In addition, the Georgian National Communication Company, which serves as the main media regulator, is obliged to conduct its own media monitoring with a view to identifying any imbalances in coverage.

During the campaign, public and private broadcasters are obliged to allocate free airtime for election advertisements of "qualified" election subjects<sup>16</sup> and to provide them with equal conditions for placement of paid campaign advertisements. In addition, television channels

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<sup>14</sup> Following the May 2012 amendments to the Law on Political Unions of Citizens, the SAS may order a fine of up to 5 times the amount of an illegal activity and up to 10 times for repeated violations.

<sup>15</sup> The monitoring will be focused on the news coverage by 15 regional channels and on hidden political advertising in the broadcasting by Tbilisi-based channels.

<sup>16</sup> "Qualified" election subjects are parties and/or candidates of parties that received at least four per cent of votes in the last parliamentary elections or at least three per cent of votes in last local elections. "Unqualified" election subjects must demonstrate public support through opinion poll results in order to enjoy free airtime/space.

that the OSCE/ODIHR NAM met with plan a range of election-related programmes, including debates and talk-shows.

In April 2011, a new media transparency law was adopted. The step was welcomed by all OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors as having resulted in greater transparency and accessibility of information on media ownership.<sup>17</sup> During the NAM visit, discussions were taking place with regard to an initiative to include a ‘must carry, must offer’ rule to the regulations governing the activities of cable operators.<sup>18</sup> On 22 June, the speaker of the parliament made a statement indicating the agreement of the authorities to introduce corresponding changes to the legislation to apply during election periods.

## H. ELECTION OBSERVATION

Civil society and domestic observer organizations are planning to undertake a number of activities aimed at both supporting and monitoring the upcoming elections, including observation of the pre-electoral process, deployment of observers on election day, monitoring of the work of DECAs and of the work of the media, voter list verification, and establishment of telephone hotlines and information websites. Civil society organizations, which formed a large coalition “This Affects You Too!” for the upcoming elections, are planning to co-ordinate their activities to avoid overlap.

A number of OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors questioned the impartiality and credibility of some domestic and international observer groups, which already started their monitoring activities. Concerns were raised that such groups may be instrumentalized by different political actors. On 19 June 2012, the parliament passed additional amendments to the Election Code, which, among others, introduced a provision outlining general principles for election observation.

The role of international election observation of the upcoming elections is considered to be of paramount importance.<sup>19</sup> All interlocutors strongly encouraged an observation activity by the OSCE/ODIHR. They highlighted the importance of monitoring the pre-electoral period and ensuring coverage of all regions of the country, in particular areas populated by national minorities.

## IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

All OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors underscored the need for an observation activity by the OSCE/ODIHR in connection with the upcoming parliamentary elections. The presence of international observers in the country sufficiently in advance of election day to follow the pre-electoral process was deemed crucial. The OSCE/ODIHR was encouraged to deploy a

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<sup>17</sup> The adoption of the law was also welcomed by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. See Resolution 1801 (2011) “The honouring of obligations and commitments by Georgia” at [www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int).

<sup>18</sup> The rule as suggested envisages that cable operators must be obliged to ‘carry’ all interested Georgian channels. Channels must be obliged to make their content available to cable networks for transmission. The measure was suggested after cases of denial by cable networks to transmit the signal of a channel supportive of the opposition and the refusal by some channels to have their signal transmitted by one of the cable providers.

<sup>19</sup> The OSCE/ODIHR NAM was informed that one international group, the Committee for Open Democracy, has already started monitoring of the pre-electoral period.

sizeable election observation activity to ensure coverage of all the regions of the country, including areas populated by national minorities.

Based on findings outlined in this report and the concerns expressed by stakeholders, the OSCE/ODIHR NAM recommends that an Election Observation Mission (EOM) be deployed to assess the upcoming elections for compliance with OSCE commitments, other international standards, and domestic legislation. Among other issues, an OSCE/ODIHR EOM could focus on the implementation and the impact of the revised legal framework, work of the media, application of new campaign finance regulations, functioning of the complaints and appeals system, and the conduct of the campaign.

In addition to the core team of experts, the OSCE/ODIHR will request the secondment by OSCE participating States of 28 long-term observers to follow the election process countrywide, as well as 350 short-term observers to observe election day procedures, including voting, counting of votes and tabulation of results.

## **ANNEX: LIST OF MEETINGS**

### **STATE INSTITUTIONS**

#### **Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

Tornike Gordadze, Deputy Minister  
Teona Giuashvili, Deputy Director, Department of International Organizations  
George Paniashvili, Head of the OSCE Division

#### **Parliament**

Pavle Kublashvili, Chairman of Legal Issues Committee  
Chiora Taktakishvili, First Deputy Chairperson, Legal Issues Committee  
Akaki Minashvili, Chairman of Committee of Foreign Relations

#### **Central Election Commission**

Zurab Kharatishvili, Chairperson  
Ketevan Dangadze, Head of Public Relations Department  
Ekaterine Azarashvili, Head of International Relations Division

#### **Civil Registry Agency, Ministry of Justice of Georgia**

Giorgi Vashadze, Deputy Minister  
Lasha Tsimakuridze, Deputy Head of Agency  
Mamuka Samkharadze, Head of the Division of Passport and Population Registration

#### **Commission for Ensuring Accuracy of Voter Lists**

Mamuka Katsitadze, Chairperson

#### **Inter-Agency Task Force**

Giga Bokeria, National Security Adviser, Secretary of the National Security Council  
Tamar Kintsurashvili, Deputy Secretary, Office of the National Security Council

#### **State Audit Service**

Levan Bezhashvili, Chairperson  
Tina Bokuchava, Deputy Chair

### **POLITICAL PARTIES**

Levan Vepkhvadze, Vice Speaker of Parliament, Christian-Democratic Movement  
Manana Kobakhidze, Chairperson, Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia  
Archil Kbilashvili, Lawyer, Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia  
Irina Pruidze, International Secretary, New Rights  
Alex Petriashvili, Political Secretary, Our Georgia-Free Democrats  
Davit Usupashvili, Chairperson, Republican Party  
Mikheil Machavariani, General Director, United National Movement  
Khatuna Gogorishvili, Chairperson, Committee of Rules and Procedures, United National Movement

## **MEDIA**

Giorgi Chanturia, General Director, Georgian Public Broadcaster  
Levan Gakheladze, Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, Georgian Public Broadcaster  
Kakha Bekauri, Chief Executive Officer, Channel 9  
Giorgi Lapherashvili, News Producer, Rustavi 2

## **NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS**

Nino Lomjaria, Executive Director, International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy  
Tamar Chugoshvili, Chairperson, Georgian Young Lawyers Association  
Eka Gigauri, Transparency International Georgia  
Keti Khutsishvili, Executive Director, Open Society Georgia Foundation  
Zviad Koridze, Chairperson of the Board, Charter of the Journalistic Ethics

## **INTERNATIONAL AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS**

Luis Navarro, Country Director, National Democratic Institute  
Nermin Nisic, Chief of Party, IFES  
Susan Cowley, Director, United States Agency for International Development (USAID)  
Khatuna Khvichia, Project Management Specialist, USAID  
Tamar Zhvania, Project Manager, UNDP  
Gigi Bregadze, Programme Analyst, UNDP  
Vladimir Shkolnikov, Senior Human Rights Adviser for the South Caucasus, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

## **DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIONS**

Ambassador Guenther Baechler, Embassy of Switzerland  
Ambassador Judith Gough, Embassy of United Kingdom  
Ambassador Elita Gavele, Embassy of Latvia  
Ambassador Masayoshi Kamohara, Embassy of Japan  
Caterina Bolognese, Head of Office, Council of Europe  
Tania Van Dijk, Deputy Head of Office, Council of Europe  
Alan Meltzer, Chief of Political and Economic Affairs, Embassy of the United States of America  
Amy Diaz, Political Officer, Embassy of the United States of America  
Ambassador Philip Dimitrov, Head of European Union Delegation  
Renata Wrobel, Deputy Head, European Union Delegation  
Helga Pender, Project Manager, Delegation of the European Commission

The OSCE/ODIHR NAM also met with other representatives of diplomatic representations in Tbilisi in the framework of an Ambassadorial Working Group co-chaired by UNDP and Council of Europe office.