

OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING
Warsaw, 26 September – 7 October 2011

Friday, 30 September 2011

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Working session 8 (specifically selected topic): Democratic elections and electoral observation:

Implementation of OSCE commitments on elections

Mr. Moderator,

This year on the 21st September Armenia celebrated the 20th anniversary of its independence. This date signifies the fact that we have passed 20 years by now on our road to effective and functioning democracy. Building an independent state is never an easy task; it requires, among many other things, a vision, a political will to materialize it and dedication to the principles of rule of law and democracy. As Armenian President mentioned recently in his statement at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe “the Armenian Government has profoundly believed in and pursued the aim of sustaining progress along the democratic path”.

Free and fair elections are one of the fundamental components of democratic government. Free and fair elections depend on various elements – such as the legislative framework and its practical implementation, the culture of law and respect for human rights. And it is absolutely essential that preparation for such elections begin long in advance.

Armenia will hold parliamentary election in 2012, and presidential elections in 2013. The fundamental legal framework which both elections will be based on – is the Constitution of Armenia. Article 4 of the Constitution states that “the elections of the President of the Republic, the National Assembly and local self-government bodies, as well as referenda shall be held on the basis of the right to universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot”.

In the course of this year, amendments to the Electoral Code were finalized and on the 26th of May they have been adopted by the Armenian Parliament. I would like to briefly highlight some important elements incorporated into the Electoral Code.

In the new Code, the regulations pertaining to the formation of the Central Electoral Commission have been changed: the number of members of the Electoral Commission is now seven, three members of the Commission are appointed based on the recommendation of the Human Rights Defender, two – by the recommendation of the Chairman of the Cassation Court, and the other two - by the recommendation of the Chairman of the Chamber of Advocates of Armenia.

The procedure of nomination of candidates has also been changed: candidates running for parliamentary and presidential elections must be citizens of Armenia. This amendment was made following the introduction of the concept of dual citizenship in the Armenian legislation and taking into consideration the fact that the citizens of other countries have certain responsibilities under the jurisdiction of their respective states. The Electoral Code also creates equal opportunities for electoral campaigns by providing free-of-charge conference spaces and curbing the cost of political advertising on TV and radio.

Also, an important clause has been introduced in the Electoral Code, according to which all decisions of the Central Electoral Commission should be posted on the official website of the Commission and be available to the public, thus adding more transparency to the electoral processes.

I would like to note that these important amendments in the Electoral Code were made in parallel with serious changes in the areas of justice and criminal procedure legislation. All these changes were introduced in view of and in line with recommendations made by international experts in close cooperation with the Council of Europe's Venice Commission and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

Last but not least, Armenia will transmit invitation to international observers to monitor the upcoming elections in due time.

Thank you.