



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement in Response to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, Vartan Oskanian

As delivered by Chargé d' Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 17, 2007

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would also like to thank Foreign Minister Oskanian for his very interesting presentation. At the outset, please if you could pass on, on behalf of the United States Government and the United States people, our own condolences as we mourn along with you the very unfortunate and untimely death of Prime Minister Makarian. We are heartened that this tragic event seems unlikely to affect the election process.

Mr. Foreign Minister, the United States appreciates your positive assessment of the preparations of your government for the May 12th parliamentary elections. . We note with concern, however, the recent bombings at the offices of one opposition party, Prosperous Armenia. We welcome at the same time the Government's condemnation of these attacks and expect it will investigate these incidents quickly and fervently.

In the run up to the official opening of the campaign on April 8th, the United States and many other friends of Armenia have worked side by side with your government to help your country fulfill its commitments - both bilateral and multilateral - to hold better elections. We are very pleased that ODIHR observers are in place and have reported that the legal preconditions for fair elections have been met. We understand that all parties that sought registration will be able to compete and are entitled to receive their allotment of state-provided broadcast time on television and radio.

Mr. Foreign Minister, we were encouraged by your statement of intention to remain committed to these standards in place so that on the day after the election, we will be able to hear from the international election observers that those elections were both free and fair.

In this regard, the United States would urge the Government of Armenia to do all in its power to guarantee full freedom of the media, freedom of assembly, and freedom of expression. We look forward to a campaign environment of free and open competition, one in which the citizens of Armenia can make informed choices as they freely choose their leadership. We expect that ODIHR's long-term observation effort will remain especially watchful for allegations of intimidation or inappropriate use of police power and will expect the Government to respond quickly to any such allegations.

Turning to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the United States remains very engaged in the peace process as one of the co-chairs of the Minsk Group, helping the sides come closer to a peaceful settlement of the conflict. We hope that both sides will continue the constructive discussions that they started in Moscow and Geneva earlier this year on “Basic Principles” for the peaceful settlement of the conflict and look forward to the outcome of the discussions later this week in Belgrade. Together with the Russian and French Co-Chairs, the United States hopes the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan will be in a position very soon to summon the political will to accept those “Basic Principles”. In the meantime, we continue to urge both sides to pursue actively those confidence-building measures that will bring the two societies closer together. It is vital for the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan to prepare their publics for the compromises that will be necessary to ensure an enduring peace.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.