

HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING, 2015

Warsaw, Poland

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Democratic institutions,

including:

- Democratic elections**
- Democracy at the national, regional and local levels**
- Democratic lawmaking**
- Citizenship and political rights**

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On Democratic Elections in the Nagorno Karabakh Republic

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At last year's HDIM I already had an opportunity to talk about the democratic processes taking place in the Nagorno Karabakh Republic as a result of which free, fair, competitive and transparent elections had become an integral part of the political culture of the Republic. Today I would like to update you on the recent elections that took place this year. On 3 May the 6th Parliamentary elections were held in Artsakh.

Elections to the 33-seat National Assembly (parliament) of the NKR were held under the proportional (22 seats) and the majoritarian (11 seats) electoral systems.

7 political parties participated in the elections with 164 candidates registered for the 22 seats under the proportional system and 42 candidates for the majoritarian system in 11 constituencies. 5 out of 7 parties passed the set threshold.

The elections were held in line with the new Electoral Code that came into force on January 1, 2015. Significant amendments were made to the new Code, in particular, a new threshold was set for political parties, as low as 5 percent, and a 7 percent threshold for party blocs allowing for a wider representation of political forces in the parliament.

Besides, the new Electoral Code has increased the number of parliamentary seats under the proportional system, which is an additional incentive for the development of political parties in the country. The Code also provides for greater, no less than 22 percent of female representation on party lists.

Over 100 international observers from 28 countries have monitored the process of elections. Among them were many present and former MPs and MEPs, representatives of non-governmental and human rights organizations as well as experts in electoral processes. The elections were covered by media outlets of more than 20 countries.

Observers assessed the elections as free, transparent, competitive and fair and in line with democratic standards and as another step towards the consolidation of democracy in the NKR.

Another manifestation of NKR's commitment to democratic values and principles, ensuring the direct participation of its citizens in public affairs, was the 6th elections to local self-government held on September 13 this year. The first elections to local self-government, including the elections of the mayor of capital Stepanakert, were held on 27 September 1998, after a law on local self-government was adopted on 16 January 1998.

Implementation of the local self-government in the Nagorno Karabakh Republic, safeguarding the citizens' direct participation in the conduct of public affairs, is regulated by the Constitution of the NKR in full compliance with international law and, in particular, the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

Dear Participants,

I would also like to touch upon the reaction of some OSCE participating states and international organizations to the elections held in the NKR. Azerbaijan, as always, condemned the conduct of elections in the NKR, which was quite predictable, taking into consideration the deteriorating human rights situation in Azerbaijan itself. Such a reaction of Azerbaijan proves of its hostile attitude not only to the people of Nagorno Karabakh, but also to democratic processes beyond its borders. The ambiguous statements of the representatives of different international structures on the elections in the NKR have been even more

confusing. The ambiguity of these statements may send the wrong signal that political considerations prevail over democratic values and human rights.

It is with deep regret that I must note also the indifference of the OSCE towards democratic processes taking place in the NKR. Such a stance runs counter to the OSCE concept of comprehensive and co-operative security. So far, in relation to Nagorno Karabakh OSCE has focused its efforts only in the political and military dimension, providing for the Minsk Group Co-Chairs with a mandate to mediate negotiations on the peaceful settlement of the Azerbaijani-Karabakh conflict. *The other two OSCE dimensions – Economic and Environmental as well as Human – remain ignored.* I am convinced that the OSCE and its Institutions have all necessary tools to support the civil society of Nagorno Karabakh Republic in its efforts to strengthen the democratic values and principles.

Sincerely,

Board