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Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
WORKING SESSION 1
Democratic institutions and Democratic elections

September 10, 2018

As delivered by

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Mr. Moderator,

Armenia attaches great importance to free and fair realization of the right to vote and form the Government elsewhere in the OSCE area regardless of the status of territories in line with Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ICCPR and OSCE commitments

In the opening statement, I have already had an opportunity to refer to landmark democratic changes occurred in Armenia in April-May this year. As a result of peaceful revolution, the new Government assumed responsibility of addressing aspirations of people to build a society with greater respect of human rights, good governance and democracy.

In doing so, the new Government recognized the imperative of early Parliamentary elections. The elections should capture will of people and ensure that the Government is formed in the environment of public trust and confidence towards the process and outcome of the elections.

The Program of Government adopted on June 1 by the National Assembly, introduces time frame of new elections which should take place within one year. The Program also recognizes the importance of empowering a citizen to make truly fair and free choice in casting their vote.

In this regard, the Government intends to implement certain measures which will effectively address shortcoming and deficiencies of previous elections. The Program of Government recognizes the necessity of amending Electoral Code by addressing certain voting complexities which were recognized problematic by number of stakeholders and also referred in the ODIHR relevant reports.

To this end, the working groups in the Government and Parliament were set up and soon the Parliament will start considering new amendments. It should be stated that civil society has already been fully involved in this review process.

Aside from amending the Electoral Code, new urgent measures were introduced to the Penal Code. They intend to effectively address vote buying. Vote buying was widely recognized as one of the issues which previously undermined public trust towards elections. To this end, last week the Parliament approved the measures aimed at strengthening liability both for vote buying and selling including through criminalization and significant increase of administrative fines.

It also worth mentioning that all measures including in the realm of new technologies which were positively assessed by stakeholders including in ODIHR reports will not be merely sustained but their application will be improved.

The upcoming municipal elections in Yerevan set on September 23 which will be an important test in this regard.

Free and fair elections, which enjoy public trust, represent the maturity of democracy and protection of human rights. The people of Armenia showed their ability to embrace demands of greater democracy and human rights in mature and non violent manner. Elections are next important step in this regard.

Armenia looks forward to closely cooperate with the ODIHR throughout the entire cycle of electoral process.

Thank you