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Observation of the parliamentary elections in Armenia (6 May 2012)

Election observation report

Ad hoc Committee of the Bureau

Rapporteur: Baroness Emma NICHOLSON, United Kingdom, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

Contents

	Page
1. Introduction	1
2. Political and legal context	2
3. Election administration and voter and candidate registration	3
4. The campaign period and media environment	3
5. Complaints and appeals	4
6. Election day	4
7. Conclusions	6
Appendix 1 – Composition of the ad hoc committee	7
Appendix 2 – Programme of the pre-electoral mission (Yerevan, 11-12 May 2012)	8
Appendix 3 – Declaration of the pre-electoral mission	9
Appendix 4 – Programme of the election observation mission in Armenia (Yerevan, 4-7 May 2012)	10
Appendix 5 – Statement of the International Election Observation Mission	12

1. Introduction

1. On 23 January 2012, the Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly decided – in principle and subject to the reception of an invitation from the competent national authorities of Armenia – to observe the parliamentary elections in that country, on 6 May 2012. It decided to set up an ad hoc committee for this purpose, comprising 30 members. It also authorised a pre-electoral mission to take place approximately one month before this election.

2. On 2 March 2012, Mr Samvel Nikoyan, President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, invited the Parliamentary Assembly to observe the parliamentary elections.

3. At its meeting on 8 March 2012, the Bureau of the Assembly took note of the declarations on conflict of interest of the candidates for the observation mission, approved the composition of the ad hoc committee and appointed me as its Chairperson. At its meeting on 23 April 2012, the Bureau approved the final composition of the ad hoc committee (see Appendix 1).

4. In accordance with Article 15 of the co-operation agreement signed on 4 October 2004 between the Parliamentary Assembly and the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), Mr Serhii Kalchenko and Mr Gaël Martin-Micallef were invited to join the ad hoc committee as legal advisers.



5. The pre-electoral mission visited Yerevan on 11 and 12 April 2012, in order to assess the state of preparations and the political climate in the run-up to the parliamentary elections of 6 May 2012 (see the programme of the visit in Appendix 2). The delegation met with the President of Armenia, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, the President of the National Assembly, the Chairperson of the Central Electoral Commission (CEC), the Deputy Head of the National Police, representatives of the main political parties running in these elections, representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the media, the Head of the election observation mission of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR) and diplomats in Yerevan.
6. The findings of the pre-electoral mission are reflected in its statement (see Appendix 3).
7. The ad hoc committee, which met in Yerevan from 4 to 7 May 2012, acted as part of the International Election Observation Mission (IEOM), which also included the election observation missions of the OSCE/ODIHR, led by Ms Radmila Šekerinska, of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Co-operation and Security in Europe (OSCE-PA), led by Mr François-Xavier de Donnea and of the European Parliament, led by Mr Krzysztof Lisek. The cooperation between the four partners was excellent.
8. The ad hoc committee held meetings with representatives of the political parties, the Chair of the Central Electoral Commission, with the Head of the Election Observation Mission of the OSCE/ODIHR and her staff, as well as with members of the diplomatic corps in Yerevan, and representatives of civil society and the mass media (see the programme of the ad hoc committee in Appendix 4).
9. On election day, the ad hoc committee split into 13 teams, which observed the elections in and around Yerevan, as well as in the regions of Armavir, Ejmiatsin, Aragatsotn, Shirak, Vanadzor, Ararat et Vayots Dzor.
10. The joint press conference of the IEOM took place on Monday 7 May 2012. A statement of preliminary findings and conclusions was published, as well as a joint press release (see the joint press release in Appendix 5).
11. The ad hoc committee wishes to thank the Armenian authorities, in particular the National Assembly, for the support and co-operation extended to the ad hoc committee in accomplishing its mission.

2. Political and legal context

12. The 6 May parliamentary elections were called by President Serzh Sargsyan on 23 February 2012. The last parliamentary elections were held in May 2007, when the Republican Party of Armenia (RPA), led by President Sargsyan, and Prosperous Armenia emerged as the dominant forces, with 63 and 22 mandates respectively in a 131-seat parliament. These two parties formed the government, together with the Rule of Law party. The other two parliamentary parties were the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) and Heritage. The Armenian National Congress (ANC), a coalition led by former president Levon Ter-Petrosyan, was not represented in the parliament, even though it was a major political force.
13. The Constitution of Armenia guarantees the fundamental rights and freedoms for democratic elections, but there are inconsistencies with international standards, such as a five-year citizenship and residency requirement for candidates and the disenfranchisement of all prisoners, regardless of the severity of the crime committed.
14. A new Electoral Code was adopted in May 2011 and, despite some shortcomings, it generally provides a sound framework for the conduct of democratic elections. It offers a number of significant improvements, some based on previous recommendations of the Council of Europe's European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) and the OSCE/ODIHR. It is important to note that the fair and proper implementation of the new Electoral Code is just as crucial as the law itself.
15. Parliamentary elections are held under a parallel, mixed electoral system. Of the 131 members of parliament, 90 are elected under a proportional system in a nationwide constituency. The thresholds for the allocation of mandates are 5% of the votes cast for parties and 7% for blocs. The remaining 41 deputies are elected in single-mandate constituencies.

3. Election administration and voter and candidate registration

16. The elections were administered by a three-tiered system of election commissions: the Central Election Commission (CEC), 41 Territorial Election Commissions (TECs) and 1 982 Precinct Election commissions (PECs). Each election commission consists of seven members. Parties, one registered bloc and candidates could appoint proxies.

17. Under the new Electoral Code, the CEC and the TECs are no longer appointed based on party nominations. PECs are temporary bodies and these were formed by 11 April 2012. Two PEC members were appointed by the TECs and each parliamentary party appointed one of the remaining five members of each PEC. The ANC, as an extra-parliamentary force, could not appoint members to the PECs.

18. Before election day, the process was administered in an overall professional and efficient manner. Proxies, observers and media representatives received the necessary information and had access to the CEC and TEC sessions. Legal deadlines were met. However, decisions were taken by the CEC and TECs with limited open discussion, thereby reducing transparency.

19. 19. The CEC provided information on the voting procedures on television and by posters and leaflets, and it organised nationwide training for the majority of TEC and PEC members.

20. The Passport and Visa Department of the police is responsible for the permanent maintenance of a nationwide electronic voter register, based on the population register, which is updated on a regular basis. Voter lists were posted at polling stations and they were also downloadable on the Internet.

21. Despite previous recommendations from the Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR that all relevant authorities take all necessary steps, according to an integrated approach, to compile an accurate voter register, the exchange of data among government institutions was insufficiently organised or regulated. Concerns about the quality of the voter lists were strongly expressed by all opposition parties (inflated numbers, inclusion of deceased people, high numbers of voters registered at the same address – sometimes inexistent). There were six verified cases of demolished buildings or of buildings damaged during the 1988 earthquake, where voters were still registered.

22. In fact, as opposed to each and every demographic indicator, which show a decrease of the Armenian population, the number of citizens listed on the voter list was the only one to increase since the 2008 presidential election, by 157 000. This could only contribute to the lack of confidence in the electoral process.

23. Prior to the election day, 2 484 003 voters were registered.

24. A high number of passports were printed in 2011 and 2012, but the Passport and Visa Department stated that this was mainly due to replacements of previous passports.

25. The Electoral Code denies access to the voter lists, as signed by the voters, after the election day, for reasons of confidentiality. The constitutionality of this provision was challenged by 28 members of parliament on 28 April 2012, but the Constitutional Court upheld it on 5 May 2012.

26. The candidate registration process was inclusive. The CEC registered all 9 candidate lists for the proportional component of the elections from 8 political parties and 1 bloc of parties, amounting to 1 016 candidates. The TECs registered 155 candidates in the 41 constituencies, of which 89 were nominated by 13 parties and 66 were self-nominated. Two self-nominated candidates were rejected. After registration, 12 candidates withdrew from the proportional and 18 from the majoritarian contest. A self-nominated candidate was beaten on 6 April and subsequently withdrew; his case is still being investigated by the authorities.

4. The campaign period and media environment

27. The election campaign was vibrant, competitive and largely peaceful. The freedoms of assembly, expression and movement were generally respected. However, violent incidents were noted, RPA supporters having assaulted ANC candidates and activists while they were distributing campaign materials. Also, the police is investigating the stabbing of an opposition supporter in a village, allegedly by the son of the RPA mayor.

28. All parties and the bloc running in the proportional elections underlined their commitment to hold elections in line with international standards. There were a number of initiatives by the authorities, electoral contestants and civil society, aimed at ensuring the integrity of the process. However, the campaign was marked by allegations of deficiencies in the voter lists, vote buying, issuance of passports to facilitate fraud, and voter intimidation.

29. Contestants did not always comply with the law with regard to the use of posters and campaign material. RPA posters were observed on public transport and posters, mostly of RPA but also of Prosperous Armenia and ARF, on municipal buildings.

30. Also, administrative resources were misused, in direct contradiction with the Electoral Code. The RPA actively involved teachers and pupils in campaign events, including during school hours. In one case, teachers and local authorities even asked parents to attend an RPA event. RPA campaign material and party flags were present on a number of school buildings.

31. There were cases of serious pressure on voters, such as obliging employees to attend RPA rallies and discouragement from attending opposition rallies.

32. A company belonging to the Prosperous Armenia leader, Gagik Tsarukyan, distributed some 500 tractors during the campaign period, in contradiction to the Electoral Code, but the CEC decided that there was no violation of the law.

33. The Prosecutor General's office and the police were transparent in their follow-up activities on reported electoral violations, but no charges were brought against potential violators and many cases were closed, some after only apparently cursory investigation.

34. The media offered extensive coverage of the main political contestants, providing each with sufficient opportunities to reach out to voters. The public broadcaster provided political parties with both free and paid airtime, in accordance with the Electoral code. This seemed to be an improvement in relation to the period prior to the official campaign. However, in several cases, television channels, instead of relying on their own material, broadcast in the news the same campaign material that was used in paid political advertisements. This concerned both RPA and Prosperous Armenia.

5. Complaints and appeals

35. Election commissions and courts dealt with election complaints in a manner that often left stakeholders without effective consideration of their claims, because of the overly formalistic approach to handling complaints.

36. Various stakeholders expressed a significant lack of trust in the election administration, courts and law enforcement bodies to handle electoral complaints impartially and effectively. There was a general reluctance to report electoral offences. Also, it was evident that knowledge on the complaint procedures was insufficient.

37. Prior to election day, the CEC received some 494 complaints. The vast majority (461) was filed by one person, mostly alleging campaigning by high-level public officials running as candidates and imbalanced news reporting. The CEC refused to consider these complaints on the ground that private individuals did not have the right to file such complaints. At the same time, the CEC examined some of the facts alleged in these complaints and found no violations. Almost all other complaints filed with the CEC were refused consideration on various technical grounds or were rejected, often without due consideration of the claim's substance or evidence. Some decisions lacked a sound legal basis.

38. Some 30 complaints were lodged with TECs prior to election day, mainly alleging infringements of campaign rules including vote buying, campaigning in schools and poster violations. Most cases were not given due consideration.

39. Four cases related to candidate registration were filed with the Administrative Court, which rejected them all. Some 22 complaints were filed with the Administrative Court before election day. Nearly all were denied consideration or were dismissed on technical grounds, without the core substance of the claim being examined or without a sound legal basis.

6. Election day

40. On election day, the observers of the International Election Observation Mission were able to visit almost 1 000 polling stations throughout the country, out of a total of 1 982.

41. Overall, election day was calm and largely peaceful. Opening procedures were assessed positively in most of the polling stations visited. Voters were well informed about the procedures to follow. However, voting was assessed negatively in 10% of the polling stations observed, which is considerable. According to

statistics used by ODIHR for almost 20 years, a percentage below 2-3% means a good election day; a percentage of 5% already raises concern and a percentage higher than 10% means an election day with high concern.

42. The main factor which negatively influenced the voting process was the lack of organisation inside the polling stations. Open disputes among PEC members and/or between PEC members and party or candidate proxies, or even with observers were common. Proxies interfered in or even directed the voting process, or rather impeded its smooth running, thereby creating chaos. In fact, there were cases when proxies were *de facto* leading the entire voting process, with the Chairperson and the members of the PEC being reduced to spectators without any authority at all. Observers had the feeling that the proxies of the Republican Party and of Prosperous Armenia behaved as if they had ownership of the election process and therefore dominated it entirely.

43. Persons wearing a badge “Maxinfo” were observed filming continuously with small cameras in a large number of polling stations, in an extremely intrusive manner, which induced tension among voters whose every movement was caught on camera from a distance of 0.5 metres. In one polling station, the person representing “Maxinfo” had secured his camera on the voting booth itself. When asked whether they were journalists, people from “Maxinfo” gave vague and contradictory answers, saying that “they represent the media” but without indicating whether they worked for a television channel or for a newspaper; others said that their work was “secret”; still others acknowledged they were in fact proxies acting on behalf of Prosperous Armenia.

44. Often, persons from “Maxinfo” constantly directed the voters towards the voting booths, standing persistently between the booths, at less than one meter from them. When asked, the Chairperson of a polling station where this had been observed stated that he himself had asked them to act in this way. It was however clear that such “assistance” was not needed at all. One team observed a “Maxinfo” representative literally shouting at the chairperson of one PEC in order to take over control of the voting process.

45. In one polling station, a domestic observer claiming to represent an NGO called “Young Diplomats” obviously had no idea about this NGO or his own role in it.

46. Organised groups of around 10 to 15 young men, mainly black-clad, were observed at the entrance of several polling stations, under the control of a well-dressed “supervisor” who clearly demonstrated authority over them. Such persons were observed approaching voters arriving at the polling station and whispering to them before they entered the polling station. When photographed, the groups dispersed. In one polling station, at the arrival of the observer team, the proxy of the Republican Party, who acted as a *de facto* leading authority inside the polling station, went outside and, after a short discussion with the group, the group dispersed. An observer who asked for a light from such a group received as a gift a lighter with the logo of the Republican Party.

47. Observers felt that the generalised intimidation of voters, by all the means described above, was the result of a deliberate and well orchestrated action from the parties of the ruling coalition.

48. Other violations were reported, such as family and group voting, lack of secrecy of the vote (in particular in small polling stations where overcrowding led voters to vote on tables, rather than in the booths), persons repeatedly assisting elderly voters, seemingly identical signatures on the voter lists. Proxies from the ruling parties and representatives of the television channel “Ketron”, owned by a leader from Prosperous Armenia, were observed instructing voters how to vote, even showing them where to put the mark.

49. Stamping passports with special ink, a method chosen by the CEC to prevent multiple voting, instead of the classical and verified method of finger inking, proved to be a complete fiasco due to the low quality of the ink, which was supposed to last at least 12 hours, but which was actually becoming invisible much faster. PECs actually had to use regular ink to stamp the passports, thereby conflicting with the reasons invoked by the CEC for using special ink (to make impossible the later identification of those citizens who had voted).

50. Allegations of vote buying were reported to the police during election day and several criminal cases were initiated.

51. The vote count process was assessed negatively by IEOM teams in almost one fifth of the polling stations observed. Basic steps (such as the counting of signatures in the voter lists) were not always observed. A few PECs performed the count in a non-transparent manner. Unauthorised persons participated in one in four counts observed. Isolated cases of falsification of the results or of the protocols were reported.

There were also isolated cases of ballot box stuffing. Figures in the protocols frequently could not be corroborated. One in three PECs observed had problems in completing the protocols and one in four PECs did not post up copies of the protocols for public scrutiny.

52. The tabulation process was assessed positively in most of the TECs observed. However, many TEC premises were overcrowded, many PEC protocols were observed to be not fully completed and, frequently, arithmetical errors had to be corrected by TECs.

53. On 13 May 2012, the official results were made public by the CEC:

- Republican Party: 44.02% (664 440 votes)
- Prosperous Armenia Party: 30.12% (454 673 votes)
- Armenian National Congress bloc: 7.08% (106 903 votes)
- Heritage: 5.76% (86 998 votes)
- Armenian Revolutionary Federation: 5.67% (85 550 votes)
- Rule of Law: 5.51% (83 123 votes)
- The Communist Party of Armenia, the Democratic Party of Armenia and the United Armenians Party failed to pass the threshold, gathering 1.5% (15 899 votes), 0.37% (5 577 votes) and 0.2% (2 945 votes) respectively.
- The Republican Party will have 69 seats in the 131-member National Assembly to be convened shortly (40 from the party-list and 29 from single-mandate elections). Prosperous Armenia will have 37 seats (28 from the party-list and 9 from single-mandate elections). The Armenian National Congress will have 7 seats (all from the party list). The Armenian Revolutionary Federation and Rule of Law will have 6 seats each (both having won 5 seats through the party list and 1 seat through single-mandate elections). Heritage will have 5 seats (all from the party list). One seat will be held by a non-partisan candidate who won in a single-mandate race.

According to the final data of the CEC, a total of 1 573 053 people out of 2 523 101 eligible voters on the electoral roll went to the polls on 6 May (about 62.3%). A total of 53 831 ballot papers were declared invalid.

7. Conclusions

54. The ad hoc committee urges the competent authorities of Armenia to take all necessary steps in order to build public confidence in elections, by guaranteeing the fairness of the entire electoral process.

55. Indeed, one of the main issues observed by the delegation prior to the election day was the generalised lack of trust in the electoral process as a whole, both by political stakeholders and by the general public. One of the most controversial issues contributing to this lack of trust was the inaccuracy of the voter lists, which gave use to speculation about the misuse of the votes of persons living abroad but who were still included on the lists.

56. The ad hoc committee considers that the Armenian citizens living abroad should be given the possibility to vote in polling stations abroad.

57. The accuracy of the voter lists is a prerequisite for correct elections, as is the absence of any pressure on voters, both during the electoral campaign and on election day. The parliamentary elections of 6 May 2012 failed to ensure both these imperatives. The ad hoc committee considers that these issues must be vigorously dealt with by the Armenian authorities in the immediate future, in particular in view of the upcoming presidential election in 2013.

Appendix 1 – Composition of the ad hoc committee

Based on proposals by the political groups, the ad hoc committee was composed as follows:

- Baroness NICHOLSON OF WINTERBOURNE, Head of the Delegation
- **Group of the European People’s Party (EPP/CD)**
 - Lolita ČIGĀNE, Latvia
 - David DARCHIASHVILI, Georgia
 - Renato FARINA, Italy
 - Andres HERKEL, Estonia
 - Jan KAŻMIERCZAK, Poland
 - Gebhard NEGELE, Liechtenstein
 - Mirosława NYKIEL, Poland
 - Yves POZZO di BORGIO, France
 - Giuseppe SARO, Italy
 - Piotr WACH, Poland
- **Socialist Group (SOC)**
 - Lennart AXELSSON, Sweden
 - Igor IVANOVSKI, “The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”
 - Athina KYRIAKIDOU, Cyprus
 - Oleksiy PLOTNIKOV, Ukraine
 - Stefan SCHENNACH, Austria
- **European Democrat Group (EDG)**
 - Roger GALE, United Kingdom
- **Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)**
 - André BUGNON, Switzerland
 - Paolo GIARETTA, Italy
 - Dangute MIKUTIENĖ, Lithuania
 - Baroness NICHOLSON OF WINTERBOURNE, United Kingdom
 - Chiora TAKTAKISHVILI, Georgia
- **European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission)**
 - Serhii KALCHENKO, Ukraine
 - Secretariat
 - Mr Bogdan Torcătoriu, Administrative Officer, Interparliamentary Cooperation and Election Observation Unit
 - Ms Daniele Gastl, Assistant
 - Mr Gaël Martin-Micallef, Venice Commission Secretariat

The pre-electoral mission was composed of two members:

- **Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)**
 - Baroness NICHOLSON OF WINTERBOURNE, United Kingdom
- **Group of the European People’s Party (EPP/CD)**
 - Piotr WACH, Poland
- **Secretariat**
 - Mr Bogdan Torcătoriu, Administrative Officer, Interparliamentary Co-operation and Election Observation Unit
 - Mr Bas Klein, Secretariat of the Assembly

Appendix 2 – Programme of the pre-electoral mission (Yerevan, 11-12 May 2012)

Wednesday 11 April 2012

- 09:30-10:00 Delegation meeting
- 10:30-11:00 Meeting with Ms Silvia Zehe, Head of the Council of Europe Office in Yerevan
- 11:00-12:00 Meeting with Ms Radmila Shekerinska, Head of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission and her staff
- 12:00-13:00 Meeting with the diplomatic corps in Yerevan:
- Ambassador Katherine Leach, British Embassy, representing the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers chairmanship
 - Ambassador Traian Hristea, Head of the European Union Delegation to Armenia
 - Ambassador Andrey Sorokin, Head of the OSCE Office in Armenia
 - ambassadors of the countries represented in the pre-election delegation
- 15:00-16:00 Meeting with representatives of the civil society:
- 16:00-17:00 Meeting with media representatives:
- Yerevan Press Club – Boris Navasardyan, Chairperson
 - Caucasus Institute – Nina Iskandaryan, Planning Officer, responsible for monitoring
 - RFE/RL – Aghasi Yenokyan, Director of the Yerevan Bureau
 - Public TV – Levon Galstyan, Deputy Director
 - Public Radio – Nerses Davidyans, First Deputy Director
 - ‘A1+’ – Mesrop Movsesyan, Director
 - Aravot daily – Arpine Simonyan, journalist specialising in elections
 - Azg daily – Aghavni Harutyunyan, journalist specialising in the work of the Parliamentary Assembly
- 17:30-18:30 Meeting with Mr Samvel Nikoyan, President of the National Assembly, with the participation of the Armenian Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly

Thursday 12 April 2012

- 9:00-11:30 Meeting with leaders and representatives of the parties running in the elections:
- Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Mr Vahan Hovhannesian, Ms Lilit Galstyan, Mr Astsvik Minasyan)
 - Heritage (Mr Styopa Safaryan, Mr Armen Martirosyan) and Free Democrats (Mr Armen Arakelian, Ms Anush Sedrakyan)
 - Prosperous Armenia (Ms Naira Zohrabyan, Mr Vahe Enfiayyan)
 - Republican Party of Armenia (Mr Galust Sahakyan, Ms Eduard Sharmazanov, Mr Davit Harutunyan, Mr Gagik Melikyan, Mr Artak Zakaryan)
 - Rule of Law (Ms Heghine Bisharyan)
- 12:00-13:00 Meeting with Mr Tigran Mukuchyan, Chairperson of the Central Electoral Commission
- 15:00-15:45 Meeting with Mr Levon Zourabian, Co-ordinator of the extra-parliamentarian coalition of parties “Armenian National Congress”
- 16:00-16:45 Meeting with Mr Serzh Sargsyan, President of Armenia
- 17:00-17:45 Meeting with Mr Hunan Poghosyan, Deputy Head of the National Police of Armenia and Mr Hovhannes Kocharyan, Head of the Visa and Passports Department
- 18:00 Meeting with Mr Ashot Hovakimyan, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Mr Zorab Mnatsakanian, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs responsible for European Integration
- 19:30 Press conference

Appendix 3 – Declaration of the pre-electoral mission

Armenia: PACE pre-electoral delegation told of competitive electoral environment but also of concerns about the possibility of multiple voting

Strasbourg, 13.04.2012 – Armenia on the eve of its parliamentary election has a competitive electoral environment in an improved legal framework, provided by its new Electoral Code, warmly welcomed a pre-electoral delegation from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), visiting Yerevan on 11 and 12 April 2012.

It is important that the Electoral Code is fully implemented and in good faith. The delegation took careful note of strong concerns of the possibility of double-voting, perhaps as a result of the inclusion on the voters' list of Armenian citizens living abroad. The delegation understood that these concerns should be addressed before the election.

The low level of trust in the electoral process as a whole is another issue underscored by the delegation's interlocutors. A series of parallel initiatives designed to increase public confidence in the electoral process have already been initiated by different electoral stakeholders. It is important for these initiatives to reach their common goal, in a synergetic way.

The electoral campaign that has just begun could well be the opportunity for all political parties and candidates to clearly disseminate their policies for Armenia's future development, so that voters can make an informed choice.

The PACE pre-electoral delegation (1) was in Yerevan at the invitation of the President of the National Assembly of Armenia. It met with the President of Armenia, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, the President of the National Assembly, the Chairman of the Central Electoral Commission, the Deputy Head of the National Police, representatives of the main political parties running in these elections, NGO and media representatives, the head of the OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission and diplomats in Yerevan.

A fully-fledged, 28-member team of PACE observers will arrive in Yerevan at the beginning of May to observe the vote in close co-operation with teams from OSCE/ODIHR, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament. The PACE delegation will present its findings and recommendations to the Assembly's Standing Committee on 25 May in Tirana.

Appendix 4 – Programme of the election observation mission in Armenia (Yerevan, 4-7 May 2012)

Friday 4 May 2012

- 09:00-10:00 Ad hoc committee meeting
- 10:00-10:30 Opening of joint parliamentary briefings
- Address by Mr François-Xavier de Donnea, Head of the OSCE PA Delegation
 - Address by Baroness Emma Nicholson, Head of the PACE Delegation
 - Address by Mr Krzysztof Lisek, Head of the European Parliament Delegation
- 10:30-11:00 Panel discussion on the context of this election
- 11:00-12:30 Briefing by the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission
- Introduction and overview of findings to date:
- Ms Radmila Šekerinska, Head of Mission
- Polling procedures and observation forms:
- Political campaign and candidates:
- Ms Monika Izydorczyk, Political Analyst
- Media environment:
- Complaints and appeals:
- Ms Marla Morry, Legal Analyst
- Questions and answers:
- 12:30-13:30 Electoral Administration
- Central Election Commission, Mr Tigran Mukuchyan, Chairperson
- 15:00-18:00 Meetings with political parties:
- 15:00-15:30 - Republican Party of Armenia, Mr Davit Harutyunyan, member of the executive body of the party
- 15:30-16:00 - Prosperous Armenia, Ms Naira Zohrabian, Chairperson of the National Assembly Standing Committee on European Integration, and Mr Aram Safaryan, Chairperson of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Protection of Human Rights and Public Affairs
- 16:00-16:30 - Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Ms Lilit Galstyan, Member of Parliament
- 16:30-17:00 - Rule of Law Party, Mr Davit Karapetyan, proportional list candidate
- 17:00-17:30 - Heritage, Mr Raffi Hovannisian, Chairperson, and Free Democrats, Mr Khachatur Kokobelyan, Chairperson
- 17:30-18:00 - Armenian National Congress bloc, Mr Levon Ter-Petrossyan, Chairperson

Saturday 5 May 2012

- 10:00-11:15 Meeting with representatives of the civil society:
- Armenian Helsinki Committee – Mr Robert Revazyan, Lawyer
 - Helsinki Citizens' Assembly – Mr Artur Sakunts, Chairperson
 - Transparency International – Mr Varuzhan Hochtanyan, Director
 - It's Your Choice – Mr Harutyun Hambardzumyan, Director
 - Open Society Foundations – Ms Larisa Minasyan, Executive Director
 - Regional Studies Center – Mr Richard Giragosian, Director
 - Counterpart International – Mr Alex Sardar, Chief of Party
 - Caucasus Institute – Ms Nina Iskandaryan, Head of Planning Department

- 11:15-12:30 Meeting with representatives of the media:
- Yerevan Press Club – Mr Boris Navasardyan, President
 - RFE/RL – Mr Aghasi Yenokyan, Head of Yerevan Office
 - Public TC – Mr Arthur Grigoryan, Journalist
 - Public Radio – Mr Nerses Davidyans, Deputy Director
 - A1+ – Ms Karine Asatryan
 - Azg Daily – Ms Aghavni Harutyunyan, Author
 - Armenian Times – Mr Vahagn Hovakimyan, Journalist
 - Jamanak Daily – Ms Lusine Khachatryan, Journalist
 - Aravot daily newspaper – Mr Aram Abrahamyan, Editor-in-Chief
 - <http://kornelij.livejournal.com> – Mr Samvel Martirosyan, blogger
- From 12:30 Meeting with interpreters and drivers for the teams deployed outside of Yerevan
- 12:30-13:30 Technical arrangements and deployment of teams deployed in Yerevan
- Distribution of regional briefing packs for teams
 - Area specific briefings conducted by the OSCE/ODIHR EOM long-term observers for teams deployed in Yerevan
- From 13:30 Meeting with interpreters and drivers for the teams deployed in Yerevan

Sunday 6 May 2012

All day Observation of opening, polling and counting

Monday 7 May 2012

09:00-10:00 Debriefing of the ad hoc Committee

14:00 Joint press conference

Appendix 5 – Statement of the International Election Observation Mission

Armenian elections competitive and largely peaceful, but shortcomings undermined confidence in the process, observers say

Strasbourg, 07.05.2012 – Sunday's parliamentary elections in Armenia featured a vibrant and largely peaceful campaign, with overall balanced media coverage, but pressure on voters and a deficient complaints process created an unequal playing field, the international election observers said on Monday.

Observers noted a campaign environment that generally respected freedoms of assembly and expression and candidates were, for the most part, able to campaign freely. But the general lack of confidence in the integrity of the process amongst political parties and the general public is an issue of great concern.

The elections were held under a new Electoral Code that provided a sound legal framework for conducting democratic elections, but stakeholders failed to implement important aspects of the new law and the manner in which complaints were dealt with undermined the right to effective legal redress.

"Armenia deserves recognition for its electoral reforms and its open and peaceful campaign environment but, in this race, several stakeholders too often failed to comply with the law and election commissions too often failed to enforce it," said Francois-Xavier de Donnea, the Special Co-ordinator to lead the short-term OSCE observer mission and Head of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly delegation. "As a result, the international commitments to which Armenia has freely subscribed were not always respected."

The process of candidate registration was inclusive overall. Despite improved legislation with regard to voter registration, observers said that the accuracy of the voter lists and their potential misuse for electoral fraud added to the lack of confidence in the process.

The high turnout of over 60 per cent, the wide age range among voters, and the clear understanding of the electoral process by young and old alike were impressive, but reports of widespread interference with the running of polling stations, voters' movement and casting of votes throughout the day by certain political parties raised serious concerns", said Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne, the Head of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) delegation. "The authorities must address this unacceptable behaviour before the presidential election next year."

"I cannot stress enough how important it is to see these elections and our preliminary findings in the broader context and as the beginning of the process, not the end," said Krzysztof Lisek, the Head of the European Parliament delegation. "Our preliminary conclusions today and the final recommendations of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, once they are published, should be taken as the goal to achieve in view of the upcoming presidential election."

Election day was generally calm and peaceful, but marked by organisational problems and undue interference in the process, mostly by party representatives.

"The election campaign was open and respected fundamental freedoms, and the media offered broad and balanced coverage during the official campaign period," said Radmila Šekerinska, the Head of the Election Observation Mission of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. "Unfortunately, this was overshadowed by concerns over the accuracy of voter lists and violations of the Electoral Code that created an unequal playing field."