

Press release

Transparency and accountability key in reform of Armenia's election laws, participants say at OSCE-supported meeting

YEREVAN, 22 November 2010 - Armenia's election legislation reform should lead to increased transparency and accountability in the election process, participants said at an OSCE-supported high-level symposium on electoral reform that began in Yerevan today.

The OSCE Office in Yerevan co-organized the two-day event which brings together representatives of the Armenian National Assembly, the Central Electoral Commission, civil society, political parties, other state structures and the international community. Participants will exchange views on how to improve Armenia's electoral code in advance of the 2012 parliamentary elections, basing their discussion on a draft electoral code proposed by the governing coalition.

"Debates and the exchange of ideas as part of the development of legislation is an essential element of the democratic process," said Ambassador Sergey Kapinos, Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan. "All stakeholders' participation in the process of amending the election code is crucial to ensure that the public accepts the code and trusts the electoral process. By co-operating closely with international structures, Armenian authorities underline the overall political importance of electoral reform."

The lack of public confidence in the electoral process is one of several problems that needs to be addressed by electoral reform, said Hovik Abrahamyan, the Chairman of the Armenian National Assembly. "I hope that this discussion will contribute to building the atmosphere of trust towards the electoral process."

Experts from the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and other international bodies will discuss the amendments in light of OSCE and international commitments on elections and provide examples of international best practice. Participants will focus on the election administration, political and campaign finance, the use of administrative resources, electoral disputes and their adjudication as well as the prevention of election fraud.

"This discussion on amending the election legislation, well in advance of the next scheduled election, is a welcome step in the process of improving Armenia's electoral framework," said Drew Hyslop, ODIHR Election Adviser. "We hope the symposium will assist the authorities in addressing the challenges identified by ODIHR during the observation of past elections."

The symposium was jointly organized with the Council of Europe, the United States Agency for International Development, International Foundation for Electoral Systems, the Delegation of the European Union, as well as the Armenian National Assembly and the Central Electoral Commission.

The conclusions of the meeting are expected to be reflected in the amendments to the Election Code that are to be presented to the National Assembly later this year. The final adoption of the Code is expected in February-March 2011.

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