



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Parliamentary Elections held May 25 in Armenia

Delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Douglas A. Davidson
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 29, 2003

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States agrees with the preliminary assessment of the May 25 parliamentary elections in Armenia, issued by the joint International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) of ODIHR, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). To quote that report, these elections "marked an improvement over the recent presidential elections", but "fell short of international standards ... in a number of key aspects."

International observers noted a number positive developments in these elections, including the diverse choice of candidates and parties in the proportional contest, the relative equality of campaign opportunities enjoyed by the various candidates, parties and electoral blocs, and the generally balanced electoral coverage provided by state-run television.

The IEOM also noted the following additional positive elements:

- Public calls for tolerance and condemnations of electoral violations on the part of the government;
- The improvement of voter registers in some communities;
- Efforts by the CEC and territorial electoral commissions to publish preliminary results by polling station;
- Constructive cooperation between political and government leaders and the IEOM; and
- The presence of a significant number of domestic observers.

Mr. Chairman, while all of this represents good news indeed, the IEOM report also enumerated a number of continuing shortcomings in the electoral process, among them falsification of vote counts, intimidation of observers and violation of ballot secrecy. Other concerns included:

- Persistent problems with the compilation of voter lists;
- Lack of uniform and consistent application of electoral legislation;
- Selective enforcement of candidate registration rules;
- Arbitrary appointments to the Precinct Electoral Commissions; and
- The withdrawal on Election Day of one prominent candidate who alleged that he had been the target of intimidation.

The United States agrees with the recommendations of the IEOM. The markedly mixed assessment of Sunday's elections is particularly disappointing considering the great progress that Armenia has otherwise made over the past 11 years in building a modern society of which its people and government can be justly proud.

The United States urges the Government of Armenia to move quickly to address the key issues highlighted in the IEOM report. Swift action on the IEOM recommendations would be the best reaffirmation of the commitments that Armenia has made to the basic principles of democracy and fundamental human rights that OSCE represents.

Thank you.