



Tbilisi/Strasbourg 1 October, 2014

Conference
'THE 2014 LOCAL ELECTIONS:
LESSONS LEARNED AND STEPS AHEAD'

*Organized by the Council of Europe and
the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)*

16 September 2014

Tbilisi
Courtyard by Marriott Tbilisi

CONCLUSIONS

Participants to the Conference “2014 Local Elections: lessons learnt and steps ahead” held in Tbilisi on 16 September 2014:

- *Recalled* that free and fair elections are the corner stone of democracy and the precondition to ensure the legitimacy of the institutions issued from the ballot.
- *Underlined* the high quality of the organisation of the 15th June 2014 local elections in Georgia and *called* for zero aggressiveness, violence and pressure-making during electoral campaigns.
- *Praised* the enhanced role played by the relevant institutions in the organisation of these elections and notably the Central Election Commission of Georgia.
- *Welcomed* the amendments to the Law on Political Unions of Citizens which introduced financial incentives for political parties to include more female candidate in their electoral lists but *deplored* the low level of women participation in politics.
- *Stressed* the contribution by the domestic observers to the election process and *encouraged* continuous dialogue between civil society and electoral stakeholders at all stages of the electoral cycle.
- *Called* on the use of the post-election period as an opportunity to conduct the necessary legislative reforms with a view to:
 - Ensuring equality of suffrage in the electoral system for parliamentary and local self-government elections including *inter alia* through the review of the length of residence requirements for candidates and the size of constituencies;
 - Guaranteeing the pluralistic nature of the country’s political institutions in the electoral system;
 - Allowing for independent candidates to run for Mayors and *Gamgebelis* as well as in other types of election;
 - Ensuring a more equal representation of parties in power and in opposition in the composition of election commissions;
 - Further implementing the regulation on the political party finance and the use of administrative resources;
 - Further improving the resolution of election disputes;
 - Ensuring active and passive suffrage for all persons with disabilities, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
 - Facilitating the participation of women in public life and the elimination of discrimination against women.
- *Emphasized* critical importance of immediate commencement of a new round of electoral reform discussions.
- *Praised* the continued cooperation with domestic and international electoral stakeholders and *called* for further actions in particular with a view to:

- Implementing efficiently the legal framework in line with European and international standards;
 - Enhancing the respect of campaign ethics;
 - Preventing the misuse of administrative resources during pre-electoral period;
 - Enhancing the role of media during the electoral campaign and strengthening their functioning in line with professional and European standards;
 - Professionalising the role of civil society in the electoral cycle;
 - Encouraging public discussion on election topics and awareness raising to increase society's political culture.
- *Highlighted* the importance by the authorities of considering Recommendations of the 2014 election monitoring mission of Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, of the Council of Europe Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR Joint Opinions of 19 December 2011 and of the 2014 Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Resolution on the functioning of democratic institutions in Georgia.
 - *Expressed* gratitude to the Georgian authorities, the Council of Europe, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Swiss Confederation for their co-operation in the organisation of the event and for their contribution to its successful completion.