

Press Release

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Congress delegation declares local elections in Armenia generally satisfactory and calm

Strasbourg, 17.10.2005 – A delegation of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe went to Armenia on 25 September and 16 October to observe local elections spread over 6 weeks between 18 September and 23 October 2005. They observed the proceedings in several districts of Yerevan and in various towns and villages in the Armavir, Lori and Tavush regions.

The delegation, headed by Sean O'Brien (Ireland, SOC), included Ömür Aybar (Turkey, EPP/CD), John Biggs (United Kingdom, SOC), Alain Chenard, former President of the Congress (France), Luca Ciriani (Italy, ILDG), Brian Coleman (United Kingdom, EPP/CD), David Lloyd-Williams (United Kingdom, ILDG), Lars Molin (Sweden, EPP/CD), Christopher Newbury (United Kingdom, EPP/CD) and Marja van der Tas (Netherlands, EPP/CD).

The delegation met Hovik Abrahamyan, Minister of Territorial Administration of Armenia and Vache Terterian, his deputy Minister, Seyran Avagyan, Adviser to the President of the Republic, Garegin Azaryan, President of the Central Electoral Commission, as well as members of the regional electoral commissions, local authority and political party representatives, election candidates, the Armenian delegation to the Congress and representatives of the media and NGOs.

"The local elections were generally in keeping with the Council of Europe's electoral standards. The electoral process was generally satisfactory", Sean O'Brien commented.

The members of the delegation visited some 100 polling stations. Despite numerous allegations of irregularities, they found the election process and, in particular, the organisation of the voters' lists generally satisfactory and an improvement compared to the previous elections. The Council of Europe had, in 2003, suggested changes to the electoral code to remedy the problem of the composition and organisation of the voters' lists.

Although it found the climate generally peaceful during the voting, the Congress delegation received reports of unbalanced and in some cases non-existent media coverage of the election campaign, which had somewhat dulled the debate.

"A livelier campaign for an election concentrated on a single day would no doubt have produced a better turnout especially in the city of Yerevan", said delegation leader Sean O'Brien.

The report on the observation of the local elections in Armenia will be presented to the Standing Committee for adoption at the meeting of 9 November 2005.

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