

Caucasus ELECTIONSWATCH

A weekly review of elections related processes in the Caucasus Region

22 May 2012

Elections cycle in the South Caucasus kicks off to a wobbly start

Over the next eighteen months the three countries of the South Caucasus - Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, will conduct important elections that many consider will determine the future of the individual countries and of the region, and most certainly will decisively impact their relations with Europe.

The cycle kicked off on May 6th with Parliamentary Elections in Armenia. Parliamentary elections in Georgia are scheduled for October. Next year will see the three countries voting in Presidential elections.

The region has a history of troubled and contested elections, and whilst some polls have been better than others, many observers feel that there has not been a single election, since the three countries regained their independence after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, that fully met international standards. This situation continuously raises questions of legitimacy around the three governments, and has been a matter of concern to European Union and US officials, who are keen to increase relations with the region and see this situation as a major obstacle.

The Armenian elections a step in the right direction, but many concerns remain.

Armenia went to the polls on 6 May to elect a 131 member parliament. It was the first national election following the Presidential elections of 2008 which ended in the tragic death of numerous opposition protestors who contested the results of that poll. The Armenian government promised a free and transparent poll, and indeed some progress was registered in a number of areas.

There was around the elections a competitive environment, as nine parties and blocs put forward different perspectives mainly on economic and domestic issues. Once the election campaign started the media played an important role in giving a voice to the different groups and in this aspect at least one could observe a level playing field. The campaign was largely peacefully with only isolated incidents of attempts to interfere with campaigning.

The election process in the run up to Election Day was well organised. The first signs of problems emerged once the Central Elections Commission announced that the voters list which included 2,482,238 names (see page 3 for more details).

The problem became more acute when on election day, the ink that was to be applied to the voters identification document, and which was supposed to last twelve hours, disappeared after a few minutes, thus taking away one of the safeguards that was to ensure that voters did not vote more than once. The Chairman of the Central Elections Commission described it as a technical problem, and by the afternoon a process of adding normal ink to the special ink was introduced in most polling stations, but by this time hundreds of thousands of people had already voted. A number of NGOs and media outlets monitoring the process recorded on camera numerous occasions of overcrowding at polling stations, the presence of unauthorized people around the ballot boxes and other irregularities.

International observers give cautious welcome.

The overall assessment of the international observers who monitored the elections has been to cautiously welcome the positive aspects, and to push for progress on the shortcomings. EU Foreign Policy Chief Catherine Ashton and Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Fule said in a joint statement:

"We welcome the efforts by the Armenian authorities to hold these parliamentary elections in a way which represents progress towards more transparent and competitive elections. However, the elections also demonstrated the need to address a number of issues in order to fully meet internationally recognized democratic standards."

A similar statement was issued by the US Government. However opposition parties and independent local monitors think that the process has been much worse than the international community thinks and cite examples of vote-buying and of blatant use of administrative resources.

But for the moment the Armenian government has bought time. It has also in the elections secured an overall majority in the new parliament, whilst on the other hand all the main political forces won enough votes to pass the threshold and be represented in the new parliament.

It has been a wobbly start for the elections cycle, one that does not leave either Armenia or the region in general, anywhere much different from where it was before.

For more on the Armenian Parliamentary Elections visit <http://links-dar.org/category/briefings/armenian-elections-2012/> ■

Caucasus Elections Watch is a specialised weekly publication focusing on elections related processes in the Caucasus, with news and analysis compiled by experts with long experience of the region.

Caucasus Elections Watch is also distributed electronically. For more in depth articles you may also visit our website www.electionswatch.org or join our facebook page.

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Other countries €10 €

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Batumi



Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili has repeated his commitment to hold free, fair and transparent parliamentary

elections in the autumn. Addressing a meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Economic Forum in the Georgian Black Sea Port of Batumi, on Saturday 12 May 2012, Saakashvili described the commitment as important for the country's future security.

"We would like a large number of international observers, including from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to come before the elections," Saakashvili said. "We want to get their advice before the elections. The advice will enable us to improve the pre-election sphere to conduct the most transparent elections." The Georgian President said "we are ready to cooperate with international institutions and will do everything to hold just elections for no one to have any questions."

The Georgian President also said that Russia had decided to conduct large military exercises in the Caucasus region close to the Georgian elections. The President said that for these reasons the elections are very important, "on the one hand, for Georgian credentials, but they also have a huge security dimension." ■

Stepanakert

Four candidates have submitted their nomination for the office of President in the self-declared Nagorno-Karabakh Republic where elections are scheduled for 19 July 2012.



Apart from the incumbent President, Bako S. Sahakyan, the other three candidates are Vitaly M. Balasanyan, a member of the National

Assembly of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic; Arkady I. Soghomonyan, Deputy Dean of the Stepanakert Branch of the Armenian State Agrarian University and Valery S. Khachatryan, currently unemployed.

Nagorno-Karabakh is a territory that has declared itself independent but is generally recognised in the international community as being part of Azerbaijan. The territory is now mainly populated by Armenians. The Azerbaijani community of Nagorno-Karabakh was displaced by the conflict in the period 1989-94 and will not be voting in the elections. The Azerbaijani Government has condemned the holding of the elections. ■

Yerevan



The newly elected Armenian Parliament will convene for its first session on 31 May at 10.00 am, according to sources close to the Armenian

Central Elections Commission.

In the meantime discussions are taking place regarding the possible formation of a coalition government. Although the ruling Republican Party of Armenia has an absolute majority in the Parliament it is seeking to renew its alliance with the party that came second in the elections, the Prosperous Armenia Party. It is understood that there are different views in the PAP as to whether or not to join in a coalition.

It is also expected that a number of those elected on the list of the RPA and its junior coalition partners the Rule of Law Party will renounce their parliamentary mandate in order to take on government posts. Under the Armenian constitution members of the Executive cannot be members of parliament.

Yerevan

The opposition Armenian National Congress, an alliance of opposition political parties and groups headed by former Armenian President Levon ter-Petrosyan, has petitioned the Armenian Constitutional court asking that the results of the 6 May elections according to the proportional system be annulled because of election irregularities. Earlier several ANC candidates had also addressed the court with similar appeals for cancelling the results of the elections in a number of single seat majoritarian elections. The President of the Constitutional Court has asked judges to review the cases, according to a court spokesperson. ■

Armenia's voter's list causes controversy

The voter's list has once more emerged as one of the main problems connected with Armenian elections. Opposition activists accuse the Armenian government of artificially inflating the voter's list by several hundred thousand voters as part of organised election fraud. The issue is somewhat more complicated, but many questions remain.

On 25 April 2012 the Armenian Passports and Visas Department (PVD) of the Armenian Police, the entity that is responsible to compile the country's election list, published the names of those entitled to vote in the May 6 elections. The list had 2,482,238 names. After some adjustments in the days prior to the elections, the final election list on the eve of the election included 2,484,003 names.

This figure immediately triggered an outcry from opposition parties who questioned how there could be in 2012 more than 150,000 additional voters in Armenia than in 2008, when it was common knowledge that the population of the country had decreased as a result of outward migration during the recent economic crisis.

Population figures are a very sensitive issue in Armenia. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union twenty years ago the population of the country has decreased according to most sources. Successive Armenian governments have tried to hide this fact, seeing it not only as a sign of political failure, but also as a sign of national weakness. At one point the government even banned the publication of the figures of the importation of floor, since it was thought that from those figures one could deduct the number of people living in the country. The issue is more complicated because a large number of Armenians move to Russia for parts of the year for seasonal work. Others lead a double life, having one home in Armenia and another in the Georgian region of Javakheti. Compiling an electoral list in such circumstances is not easy.

However suspicion of potential vote rigging started emerging when the media began carrying colourful reports of hundreds of people registered in one house or flat, of people living in buildings that have been demolished, and generally of people on the list who should not be there.

In an effort to reduce the risk of fraud a number of opposition members of parliament petitioned the Constitutional Court, asking

that the names of those who voted be made public after the election. The Court denied the request on the basis that it needed to protect the rights of citizens who may not want to make the fact that they had voted or not made public.

The issue continued to remain controversial after the elections with many opposition figures citing it as one example of why they considered the election not fair.

The OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission in its preliminary report issued the day after the election stated that

In the run-up to the elections, concerns about the quality of the voter register were expressed by most parties, adding to the general lack of confidence in the electoral process. They alleged that deficiencies in the register, such as inflated numbers, inclusion of deceased people and high numbers of voters registered at the same address, might be manipulated on Election Day. They also raised questions regarding citizens living abroad, and the increase in the number of registered voters by some 157,000 since the 2008 presidential election.

The report further noted that "The Electoral Code provides voter registration on election day, which is contrary to good practice."

This is not the first time that the voter's list became an issue in Armenian elections and after previous elections the Venice Commission, a body of the Council of Europe that advises on legal and electoral matters, had made strong representations to the Armenian government to improve the voters list through better co-ordination between different bodies involved in the process of voter's registration and by stopping the practice of voter's registration on election day. A country with a small population like Armenia should have no excuse for not having an accurate voters list.

According to the statistics given by the Armenian Central Elections Commission the day following the vote, the number of actual voters was 1,574,430 or 62.26% of those on the list, which by the time the number of people who were not on the list, but were allowed to vote on election day were added, now totaled 2,524,960. ■

Opposition activists accuse the Armenian government of artificially inflating the voter's list by several hundred thousand voters as part of organised election fraud.

"In the run-up to the elections, concerns about the quality of the voter register were expressed by most parties, adding to the general lack of confidence in the electoral process."

OSCE/ODIHR EOM Preliminary Report, 7 May 2012.

The full preliminary report of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission to Armenia is available on <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/90334>

FACTBOX

Armenian Parliamentary Elections

6 May 2012 - Results

Number of voters: **1,573,053**

Number of voters on the voting list (including those registered on polling day): **2,523,101**

Percentage of voter turnout: **62.26%**

Number of blank or invalid votes: **53,831**

Results:

Republican Party: **664,440 (44.02%)**

Prosperous Armenia: **454,673 (30.12%)**

ANC: **106,903 (7.08%)**

ARF: **85,550 (5.67%)**

Rule of Law: **83,123 (5.51%)**

Heritage: **86,998 (5.76%)**

Armenian Communist Party: **15,899 (1.5%)**

Democratic Party of Armenia: **5,577 (0.37%)**

United Armenians Party: **2,945 (0.20%)**

Voting was for 131 seat parliament of which 90 are elected on a proportional party list and 41 on single constituency majoritarian system. The distribution of seats in the new parliament will be as follows

Republican Party: 70 seats

Prosperous Armenia: 36 seats

Armenian National Congress: 7 seats

Rule of Law: 7 seats

Heritage: 5 seats

Dashnak ARF: 5 seats

Non-partisan: 1 seat.

Source: Central Election Commission of the Republic of Armenia

Georgia's ruling United National Movement pushes ahead with progressive amendment to lower the minimum age for running for parliament

Georgia's ruling party, the United National Movement (UNM), is pushing ahead with a constitutional change that will bring Georgia in line with progressive European countries.

An initiative of the UNM aims at revising the Constitution of Georgia by lowering the age at which one can stand for a parliamentary seat from 25 to 21 years. The public discussion period for draft amendments has concluded, and a discussion on the results of these meetings took place in Parliament on May 7, where it was recommended that the initiative enter the standard legislative process.

According to the draft law's explanatory note, the purpose of the initiative is to encourage engagement of younger people in the political process and support the principle of equality in law-making:

"Effectiveness of the work and high level of representativeness of Parliament, as a supreme law-making body is largely depended on the composition of Parliament, to what extent do professional citizens of any generation and proper preparation and education have an equal opportunity to participate in its activities.

According to Article 49 of Constitution of Georgia, a person who is 25 years old or more can be elected as a Member of Parliament. At the current stage of democracy-building and legal reforms, it is reasonable to re-examine the above-mentioned limitation in order to allow young people to have an opportunity to engage in the supervision of rapidly changing political and economic processes who, in case of public trust, will be elected in the highest law-making body and participate in the democratic development of the country."

Opposition to this amendment has been weak and some commentators are even suggesting that the law should allow eighteen year olds to stand for parliament as is the case in many EU countries.

Georgian Government sets up inter-agency election task force

The Georgian government announced on May 18 that it was setting up of an inter-agency group to monitor and react on possible violations ahead of October parliamentary elections and "to ensure a transparent and fair" electoral environment.

The Inter-Agency Task Force for Free and Fair Elections (IATF) is headed by Secretary of National Security Council Giga Bokeria, and includes representatives from the Ministries of Internal Affairs, Justice, Regional Development and Infrastructure, Finance, and Foreign Affairs, as well as from the office of National Security Council.

Creation of such group is envisaged by the election code, according to which the deadline for setting of the inter-agency task force was July 1, 2012. According to the election code, IATF is mandated with "preventing of and reacting to violations of electoral legislature by public officials."

Political parties, which will notify the commission about alleged violations will have the right to take part in IATF's sittings, according to the election code. Representatives from local and international election observer organization can also be invited to the commission sittings.

In case of violations, the inter-agency task force will "recommend" state agencies or CEC to take "relevant actions in a reasonable timeframe," according to the election code.

"The IATF will foster coordination among various government agencies and promote dialogue between the government and all stakeholders in the electoral process. The IATF will cooperate with political parties, domestic non-governmental organizations and international organizations, and election observers," the National Security Council said in a statement on May 18.

A similar inter-agency group was also operating ahead of the January, 2008 early presidential election, as well as during parliamentary elections in May, 2008 and local elections in May, 2010. ■

Source: civil.ge.



Giga Bokeria, Secretary of the Georgian National Security Council and Head of the Election Task Force (picture courtesy of BBC)



A rally of the Dashnak Armenian Revolutionary Federation in Yerevan on 10 April 2012 (picture courtesy of www.arfd.info)

Armenian Election Campaign considered to be competitive and vibrant

It is not possible to say that there has been a level playing field in the Armenian Parliamentary Elections Campaign of the past weeks. Some parties could make use of administrative resources, and others of financial resources not available to their competitors. But an active media, and the ability to use time on television for all parties, enabled all contestants to put across their message to the electorate.

The media in the elections divided into three streams. The printed media has close association with the political parties and in many cases this was reflected in its coverage of the elections. New media: websites and news portals provided a broad spectrum of opinion and were perhaps the most free and active in the campaign. Some web-based media outlets had television programmes included on their sites which complimented the coverage of the regular TV stations. These sites however have limited audiences.

As usual the most important role was played by television stations. Though largely controlled by government, the stations by and large followed guidelines for balanced reporting once the election campaign started. The fact that all parties had free air time, and also the possibility of purchasing a certain amount of paid air time, helped a lot in enabling the message of all parties to get across to the electorate.

All the major parties held rallies in the centre of Yerevan, and in other parts of the countries.

These events were usually well attended and often accompanied by musical entertainment. The campaign nearly ended in tragedy when in the last hours of campaigning on May 4th an incident occurred at the final rally of the ruling Republican Party of Armenia. Balloons that had been filled with helium exploded throwing a ball of fire on the largely young crowd. Several dozen people suffered severe burns although miraculously no one died, and most of those injured were released from hospitals a few days later.

There were some small incidents of violence but on the whole the campaign was peaceful. The tone was not always positive and there were some personal attacks on candidates and politicians.

Armenia's president Serzh Sargsyan led from the front. He participated in numerous activities of his Republican Party (RPA) addressing voters on a range of domestic and local issues. The role of local governors and district administrations remains controversial. Many have been accused of supporting the ruling party not only through the use of administrative resources but also through intimidation of voters.

The full engagement of all the main political forces in the election campaign has helped give credibility to the election process and is definitely a positive factor. ■

"These were the elections with the most fraudulent methods. But the pre-election season was excellent in terms of the media [coverage]. We have not had such thing [before]."

Larissa Alaverdyan, Former Ombudswomen of Armenia and candidate from the Heritage Party quoted by news.am on 19 May 2012.

FACTBOX

Armenian Parliamentary
Elections 2012

Statistics

Number of polling stations:
1982

**Number of candidates
registered:**

Proportional List: 1016
Majoritarian: 155

Female Candidates registered:

Proportional list: 235 female
Majoritarian: 12

**Number of organisations
monitoring the elections:**

International: 10
Domestic: 54

**Number of domestic observers
accredited: 27,141**

Number of domestic observers
who did not pass the mandatory
CEC test, or chose not to
observe: 4310

Source: OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation
Mission

Persistent reports of intimidation of opposition activists in Georgia's regions.



Georgian media has over the last weeks carried a string of reports of intimidation by officials of local authorities, of opposition supporters in Georgia's regions.

Rezonansi newspaper and other media outlets have reported the dismissal of more than twenty school teachers in the Shida Kartli region due to their support of opposition parties, or as in the case of Gori School teacher, Ia Bzhalava, because her husband was an activist of the opposition Free Democrats.

The web site Democracy and Freedom (DF) Watch also reported the case of Giorgi Beruashvili, former employee of Privat-Bank in Kareli, a village in Shida Kartli, who was fired only because his sister and mother were attending a Georgian Dream meeting. He told DF Watch that he was considered as one of the bank's most valued employees before that presentation, and no one had ever mentioned that he was in danger of being fired. But the day after the presentation, he was told that he was fired, because 'members of his family think in an opposition way.'

Tsisana Javakhishvili says she was the only biology teacher at the public school in the village Nikozi near Gori. She was fired only because she held different views; her husband participated in the local elections in 2010, representing the Free Democrats. The official reason for her firing was lack of experience. But it later emerged that the headmaster directly told her she had to leave her job because of the political views of her husband, because 'he didn't need an oppositional [person] at school.'

DF Watch contacted the education ministry for a comment as to why the teachers were fired, but its press office told us that 'the ministry doesn't do comments on issues like this.'

Interpressnews quoting sources close to the Free Democrats reported that party supporters who travelled to Dedoflistsvaro from various villages of Kakheti region to participate in the opening of the Free Georgia office in the district were subject to pressure by local administration officials. The party has formally protested about the incident.

Another incident involved an activist of the Georgian Dream coalition in Samagrello Region. The Coalition reported that on May 20, at 00:45 a.m. in the Village of Nojiskhevi (Khobi region) near the railway passage, 4 unidentified persons attacked the Head of its' Khobi regional Office Mamuka Kardava. The attack was severe and Kardava was hospitalised.

The situation in the regions of Georgia is very different from that in the capital Tbilisi. Politically appointed Governors hold absolute control over all aspects of the lives of citizens. The matter of the schoolteachers is very relevant to the election process. In Georgia many schools serve as polling stations during elections and many teachers are part of the election administration process during the poll. The firing of teachers in Shida Kartli may therefore be an attempt to "clear the decks" ahead of elections in October. ■

Source: CEW with various media outlets.

Georgian Civil society struggles to regain pre Rose revolution momentum



For the last nine years Georgian NGOs and civil society in general have been struggling to regain the status within their society that they held prior to the Rose Revolution of November 2003. That event on the one hand brought many civil society leaders into the political mainstream, as the government of President Saakashvili tapped into the talent of the mainly young civil society leadership to fill many government posts. On the other hand the government's approach to what was left of civil society has since then not always been friendly. A senior government official recently described civil society leaders as "Tbilisi based, elitist and disconnected".

There are some signs that a new generation of civil society leaders are now ready to reclaim the ground they have lost.

Last year non-governmental organizations engaged in the field of elections, and media representatives, started a campaign under the name "This Affects You Too" aimed at improving election legislation and developing a better pre-election environment. Up to 170 non-governmental and media organizations as well as about 1500 individuals signed the petition submitted to the Parliament of Georgia on 17 February, 2012, together with a package of legislative proposals. The proposals, aimed at mellowing down some of the draconian laws that the Georgian parliament had adopted earlier, particularly on party funding. It has had a measure of success.

"This Affects You" has now started the second stage of the campaign that envisages amendments to the Election Code, as well as the regulation of the media environment during election period. On 7 May, the participants of the campaign submitted a new package of legislative proposals to the Parliament of Georgia. The proposals were also explained to an audience which included representatives of Tbilisi based foreign embassies and international organisations and NGO representatives at a well-attended event at the Tbilisi Marriott Courtyard on Thursday, 17 May 2012.

The legislative proposals address the following issues:

1. Refining the vote count procedure on the day of the elections. Under the proposal, the number of actual voters participating in the elections should be documented in the summarizing records before the ballot boxes are opened in the precincts. This will prevent the precinct electoral commissions, after they have ascertained the elections outcomes at specific precincts, from switching the numbers of the electorate that showed up at the elections. The amendment will help prevent modifying the summarizing records in the event if the outcomes turn out unsuitable for the election administration.

The mechanisms for summing up the election outcomes have also been made clearer.

2. Ensuring transparency of the activities on behalf of the electoral administration – live broadcasting of the sessions of the Central Election Commission and district electoral commissions during the pre-election period as well as their live internet coverage is ensured.

3. Regulating the use of administrative resources –pre-election restrictions are imposed on the use of administrative resources starting from 1 June of the election year; the range of persons not entitled to participate in the election campaign is increased; activities of the legal entities of public law, government officials, and heads of regional and local governments fall under the regulation; a ban is imposed on campaigning during events/presentations funded from state/local budget; more precise regulations on budget expenditure as well as clear restrictions on the use of budget resources are put in place; liabilities for local self-government bodies and district electoral commissions as well as transparency standards of their activities and sanctions for non-fulfilment of those standards are better defined.

4. Ensuring equal media coverage for political parties during the election period – the definition for hidden advertising has been clarified; rules have been provided for placing social, commercial and free political advertisements, as well as rules for discussing and responding to the media monitoring results carried out by both Georgian and international organizations have become binding, and rules for holding pre-election debates and providing information on the elections have been set up.

5. Defining the rights and responsibilities of the Georgian National Communications Commission in such fields as broadcasting transmission, copyright and allied rights – under the proposal, cable network operators are obliged to retransmit television signals of Georgian Public Broadcaster as well as community and satellite broadcasters. Additionally, broadcasters are required to sell their retransmission rights to cable network operators without establishing monopolistic prices or other conditions that could bring about unjustified disparity of forces in the broadcasting market."

Georgia's civil society was for a time considered as one the most positive pro-democracy factors in the post-Soviet space, and its loss of clout was a serious setback to Georgian national state-hood. The new assertiveness of Georgian NGOs has been welcomed by many observers of the region, and its impact will undoubtedly be felt in Georgia and beyond. ■

European Union urges South Caucasus governments to implement changes ahead of elections.

On May 15, the European Union issued its annual package assessing its relations with its neighbouring countries in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy. The package was introduced to journalists by High Representative for Foreign Policy and Security, Catherine Ashton and by Enlargement and ENP Commissioner Stefan Füle.

In the documents, the EU sends a clear and unequivocal message to the three South Caucasus countries to make improvements on a number of issues related to elections and the broader aspects of democracy and human rights. Whilst recognising that some progress has been made, particularly in Armenia and Georgia the reports highlight serious shortcomings in all three countries.

The message to the three countries included:



To Georgia

- Ensure free and fair parliamentary elections, in line with internationally recognised democratic standards;
- address identified shortcomings in the electoral legislative framework, in a consultative and inclusive manner, in good time before the elections.
- Continue to strengthen freedom of expression and opinion;
- implement the Law on Transparency of Media Ownership;
- ensure balanced media coverage and equal access to the media and advertising in the run-up to the elections.
- Continue the reform of the justice system and strengthen the independence and efficiency of the judiciary;
- ensure further liberalisation of criminal justice policies and practice in line with Council of Europe standards;
- revise regulations on administrative detention in compliance with fair trial norms;
- reflect the recommendations of the Public Defender's Office in policy making.
- Increase accountability and democratic oversight of law enforcement agencies;
- combat impunity and investigate fully any accusations of human rights violations by law enforcement agencies.



To Azerbaijan

- Extend full cooperation to the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly on political prisoners.
- Swiftly implement the Human Rights Action Plan adopted in December 2011.
- Step up efforts together with Armenia to reach agreement on the Madrid Principles in accordance with the commitments made by the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan in the framework of the Minsk Group.

- Provide unconditional access for representatives of the EU to Nagorno Karabakh and surrounding regions.
- Ensure transparency in implementing the laws governing the process of demolitions, expropriations and forced evictions in Baku and the regions.
- Adopt the draft law on defamation which provides for the abolition of criminal liability for defamation and insult.
- Bring legislation on elections, freedom of assembly, freedom of association and media freedom into line with international standards and ensure its full implementation
- Step up reform efforts in all aspects of the judicial system: prosecution, trial, sentencing, detention and appeals.



To Armenia

- Ahead of the upcoming presidential elections scheduled in 2013, address the shortcomings identified by OSCE/ODIHR concerning the May 2012 Parliamentary elections, in order to fully meet recognized international democratic standards
- Fully investigate the deaths that occurred during the clashes of March 2008 and the allegations of ill-treatment in police custody and violation of due process.
- Ensure finalisation and implementation of the National Human Rights Strategy and Action Plan.
- Adopt amendments to the legislation on broadcasting in compliance with the recommendations of the OSCE and the Council of Europe, and ensure pluralism in the broadcasting media.
- Finalise the draft law on Conscience and Religious Freedoms, in line with international standards as well as the legislation on alternative civilian service, in conformity with Venice Commission and OSCE recommendations.
- Adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, including further steps leading to the harmonisation of legislation with the EU acquis in the areas of gender equality and non-discrimination.
- Strengthen enforcement of the Anti-Corruption Strategy and boost capacity for combating corruption.
- Strengthen the implementation of the reform agenda presented by the Armenian authorities, including measures to reform public administration and the judicial sector (especially increase the independence of the judiciary, improve the training of judges, review the code of criminal procedure, pursue the Police Reform Programme).

The full set of documents is available at http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/documents_en.htm. ■