

# Caucasus ELECTIONSWATCH

A weekly review of elections related processes in the Caucasus Region

31 July 2012

## OPINION

# Is the Georgian Election “already stolen”?

**Last week the Brussels newspaper and web portal New Europe carried an interview with Georgia’s Deputy Prime Minister and State Minister for European Integration, Giorgi Baramidze, who was in the Belgian capital to attend the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Eastern Partnership countries.**



**Giorgi Baramidze**

In the interview Baramidze lashed out at Georgia’s opposition, and through innuendo rather than facts, tried to link the opposition Georgian Dream Coalition, and its leader Bidzina Ivanishvili to the Russian leadership, whilst warning of ominous Russian moves ahead of the elections.



**Tedo Japaridze**

This prompted a sharp rebuke from one of the current leaders of the opposition coalition and former Foreign Minister, Tedo Japaridze. Japaridze suggested that given the latest moves by the Georgian government against

the opposition, next October’s Parliamentary election may have already “been stolen.” He further accused the current Georgian leadership of betraying the original ideas of the Rose revolution which brought them to power in 2003. Japaridze however reiterated the Georgian Dreams commitment to work within the constitutional process, as well as its adherence to a policy of full European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

The Georgian government has regularly attached a pro Russia label, or worse, to anybody who has disagreed with it in both Georgia and abroad. Sometimes they were justified, often they were not. It is very doubtful if this strategy is going to work this time round, but more importantly this should not be used to justify a flawed electoral process.

This exchange of views in the European media has been seen as somewhat bizarre, given that Baramidze and Japaridze are both considered amongst the staunchest pro-western politicians in Georgia, and both have influential friends in Washington.

Georgian politicians often indulge in brinkmanship, only to draw back at the eleventh hour. Whenever they did not the nation paid a heavy price subsequently.

In the forthcoming parliamentary elections much will depend on what conclusions the international community draws at the end of the process. It is important that international monitoring organisations take a holistic approach that takes into account the broader election environment. More importantly all sides need to be judged on their deeds and not simply on their words.

Georgia needs an electoral process that both government and opposition trust and believe in. Anything less will do untold harm to the country’s future. It is about time Georgian politicians understand this.

If the Georgian Opposition thinks that the October Elections are already stolen than the Georgian government needs to be worried, and to do something about it.

(Extracts from the interview of Giorgi Baramidze with New Europe, and of the response of Tedo Japaridze on the same outlet are reprinted on pages 4 and 5). ■

Caucasus Elections Watch.

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](http://www.electionswatch.org) or join our facebook page.

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## Tbilisi

Via a video on his facebook page on 25 July, leader of the opposition coalition Georgian Dream, Bidzina Ivanishvili, announced he would pay the fine issued him by the government for campaign financing violations to help provide aid and support to the victims of the devastating hailstorms of 19 July.

The storms have been described by some aid groups in the country as “the largest disaster in Georgia since the August 2008 conflict” with Russia.

The Georgian Dream has heavily criticised the government for not providing enough support to the residents of over 40 disaster-struck villages in the Eastern region of Kakheti in Georgia.

Ivanishvili has described the government’s plan to provide between 300 and 1500 lari in financial compensation to farmers as “ludicrous.”

While previously refusing to pay the fine the leader of the opposition declared as illegal and absurd, Ivanishvili has decided that the only way he and his coalition can legally help the victims of the storm is by providing funds to the cash-strapped government of Georgia.

And the best way to do that was for the aspiring opposition politician to pay his dues.

Ivanishvili transferred 80 million lari, or approximately USD 48 million, to the government, which was confirmed by the National Bureau of Enforcement of the Ministry of Justice (NBE) last Wednesday. The NBE also announced that Cartu Bank and the shares in Progress Bank (22%) were returned to Ivanishvili as of 26 July. The original director and board members were reinstated as of Thursday, the state relinquishing control back to the businessman.

In reference to the payment of his fine, Ivanishvili stated that with this additional money the authorities should be used to fully compensate residents of the region for damages.

Though repeatedly indicating that Georgian Dream will be closely monitoring the use and distribution of these funds, the government has made no indication that the funds will in fact be used for this purpose.

Vakhtang Balavadze, Member of Parliament for the ruling United National Movement (UNM) party stated that aid donations and paying fines are not one and the same. Lambasting the idea that one can give aid by paying a fine, Balavadze noted, is like saying that you will pay your parking ticket, but “you are paying this fine not because you violated rules, but because you wanted to help [an] orphanage.”

“[Ivanishvili’s] funds paid [to] the state budget,” he said, “will serve the people and [the parliament of Georgia],” affirming that the decision on how to spend the funds will be decided with the people.

These sentiments were echoed by Deputy Speaker of Parliament and UNM representative, Mikheil Machavariani.

“A lot of companies are fined and they pay those fines into the state budget, and where these fines go is determined by the budget law,” Machavariani says. “[Ivanishvili’s] decision has proven once again that the fine was justified and it has been paid. It was evident that this was aimed at getting the bank back. But since we’re in the middle of an election campaign, everyone is trying to use things for their own purposes.”

And while the government maintains it has done everything it can to help the victims in Eastern Georgia, the opposition, has accused the government of having “recklessly” spent emergency reserve funds on extravagant outdoor concerts and other cultural events, including preparations for the Eurovision song contest.

Two funds, one controlled by the president and the other by the parliament, exist in Georgia containing 50 million lari each for emergency relief efforts. While the government should have used these monies to provide emergency relief work for the storm victims, the opposition coalition states that the parliament’s readjustment of this year’s budget on Wednesday demonstrates that the government misused these funds. According to reports from 2007, only one per cent of these funds were used for emergency work, while 31 per cent was spent on public entertainment events; though this could be a result of the fact that there were few natural disasters in 2007.

Ivanishvili pledged to do everything he can to help those affected by the natural disaster in Kakheti.

“Even if these funds are not enough, I will try to find additional legal ways to force the authorities to fully compensate for the lost crops,” he said.

“But,” he assured the public, “if the authorities do not make it, we will come into [power] – some two and a half months are left before [the parliamentary elections] and I promise to the population that we will compensate fully for the inflicted damage.”

Regardless, it appears that the opposition and the government have found a solution through which to settle the fine imposed on the leader of the Georgian Dream under which both sides save face.

Report prepared for CEW by Karina Gould with additional reporting from civil.ge, RFE/RL, and Democracy and Freedom Watch. ■

# Ilham Aliiev to be YAPs candidate in the 2013 elections.

**The ruling party of Azerbaijan, the New Azerbaijan Party (YAP), has announced that Ilham Aliyev, incumbent president and Chairman of the YAP will be the party's candidate for the presidential elections scheduled for October 2013.**

The candidacy was announced last week by deputy party chairman, Ali Ahmadov.

Ahmadov stated that the official announcement will be made at a party convention to be held before the elections.

Stressing the rapid economic development as well as the rise of Azerbaijan's international profile during his time as president, Ahmadov, indicated Aliyev was the natural choice.

"A candidate from the ruling party," he said, "is the candidate supported by the Azerbaijani people. We have repeatedly stated that the candidature of the chairman of the ruling party, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev is supported not only by all members of the party, but by most people."

Aliyev will be running for his third term in office. He was elected on October 15, 2003 and October 15, 2008. In 2008, according to the OSCE-ODIHR report, Aliyev received 88.7% of the vote. Ilham Aliyev was preceded by his father, Heydar Aliyev, who was president from 1993 to 2003.

Until recently, the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan only permitted a person to preside over two terms as President. However, the President recently signed into law a constitutional amendment which will allow individuals to run for and hold an unlimited number of consecutive terms as President.

With regard to elections observation, Bahar Muradova, deputy speaker of the parliament in Azerbaijan, told reporters that Azerbaijan is always interested in inviting international representatives to observe the elections, including the October 2013 Presidential elections.

Muradova invited the OSCE to monitor the 2013 Presidential elections during the visit of Eamon Gilmore, OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, to Baku in June.

Gilmore expressed his hope that Azerbaijan will continue to implement the recommendations made by the last OSCE-ODIHR mission for the 2008 Presidential elections.

The OSCE-ODIHR Elections Observation Mission from the 2008 Presidential elections made numerous recommendations on how to improve the conduct of elections to the government of Azerbaijan.



**President Ilham Aliyev chairing a recent meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers**

The OSCE suggested engagement in a dialogue with other political actors in Azerbaijan to address issues surrounding the Election Code, particularly the complaints and appeals mechanism, voter and candidate registration procedures, the need for a more balanced media environment during campaigning, unbiased domestic observers and tightening voting procedures.

The opposition parties and civil society in Azerbaijan, as reported previously in CEW, organised a round table over proposed amendments to the Election Code. If these amendments do not pass in Azerbaijan's parliament this autumn, the opposition has declared they will boycott the upcoming elections.

Ahmadov during his announcement noted that YAP continues regular dialogue with the opposition. However he commented that his understanding of dialogue does not include "a squabble around the round table."

In June, the parliament of Azerbaijan also passed legislation granting amnesty to past and present Presidents of the Republic, and their spouses for acts carried out under their responsibility both before his or her election and during his or her term in office. Furthermore, the law provides a pension of 50% of the salary received while president from the day the ex-President steps out of office until his or her death. In the event of his or her death the pension will be extended to the surviving spouse, in the absence of a spouse the pension will go to any children under the age of 18. The law will not apply to a President who has been impeached. ■

Compiled by Karina Gould for CEW from Azerbaijani media sources.

# Extracts of the interview of Giorgi Baramidze, Vice Prime Minister of Georgia with New Europe on 23 July 2012.



## On the Opposition

“Into this situation we see one [opposition candidate Bidzina Ivanishvili] who has all his fortune originated from Russia, who is the biggest single shareholder of Gazprom, and also other state-owned Russian companies, declared that he’s going to be prime minister of Georgia. So how he is going to do that if he’s not counting on something outside Georgia. It’s not clear. I mean certainly, there is a polarized situation in the country, and additional tensions, and he said he will buy everyone, press and politicians using this money that is already united from Russia illegally and he already committed several acts against the Georgian law that prevents bribery of the electorate”.

“We know that the same person [Ivanishvili] already hired many lobby companies from Europe and United States, and is going to organize parliamentary monitoring with false monitors, and conduct some not independent opinion polls while saying that he doesn’t trust independent opinion polls conducted by different organizations like National Democratic Institute and others. I’m saying that all these different opinion polls are showing that our party, the National Movement, is far ahead of his political party”.

## On Reforms

“We did make very significant progress in these areas; fighting corruption, police reform, healthcare reform, education reform, judiciary reform, but still, we need to do more. Now we are meeting another important date, elections in Georgia, and it needs to be done according to highest standards”.

## On the elections

“I can tell you from our side that what worries us, that the Russians are preparing for something.....They are preparing two military exercises. They first announced something for September, and then when they heard we are having elections in October, they postponed it to October. They said they are going to participate in some kind of exercise, in case of confrontation between the west and Iran. We don’t think that Russia is going to take either side, so which conflict are we talking about? We have great concern about this, because it is not only in Russian territory, because the troops are going to be stationed also in the occupied territory. As well as our southern neighbour Armenia, so this exercise is conducted in inside Georgia and around it”.

“The Russians are preparing something.” Giorgi Baramidze

## Who is Giorgi Baramidze?

Giorgi Baramidze has been a central figure on the Georgian political landscape for the last twenty years. He started his political career as a member of parliament of the Green Party and was a close associate of its leader Zurab Zhvania. He remained a close associate of Zhvania until the latter’s mysterious death in 2005.

After the 2003 “Rose revolution” Baramidze became the second most important member of Zhvania’s team in the revolutionary leadership, serving first as interior minister and later as defence Minister. Shortly before Zhvania’s death his star waned somewhat and he was pushed upstairs as Deputy Prime Minister with responsibility for European integration.

Baramidze retains some popularity at the grassroots and there are reports that he may be fielded as candidate for the ruling United National Movement in his old constituency of Didube in Tbilisi.

# Extracts from the response to Baramidze's interview, by opposition spokesman and former foreign minister, Tedo Japaridze published by New Europe on 24 July 2012.



## On the forthcoming elections

"My feeling is that the election has been stolen already, which is why the opposition has been treated the way it has. I expect the situation to escalate, and in this respect the summer will be really hard. But we are committed to political and constitutional ways. The government tries to engage us to street activities, but we are strictly committed to the constitutional path".

## On the Rose Revolution and its ideas

"Those of us who supported the Rose Revolution now feel really betrayed", he says. "The current government have betrayed the values and principles of the revolution, which were supposed to be about a better future and hope for Georgia".

## On the agenda of the Georgian Dream Coalition

"[The agenda for the Georgian Dream Coalition] is not just to fight Saakashvili and be critical, but to fight for Georgia's better future".  
"My counter message is: let us have transparent elections. Let the citizens judge and decide".

## On the current Georgian Government

"[The current Georgian Government] is a manipulative one. It is quite skilful at delivering messages that the west wants to hear, in Brussels, Berlin and Washington DC".

"Yes, I want [The Georgian Dream Coalition] to win the elections, but more than this, I want to live in a country where elections are lost by a party in power. This has never happened in Georgia".

## On EU and Euro-Atlantic integration

"[We] acknowledge that this government has done positive things in this area [but] before we talk about EU membership, we should be a normal, functioning democracy. For Georgia, European integration should be used for its internal processes first. It will be a long process". ■

"Let us have transparent elections,  
Let the citizens judge and decide."

Tedo Japaridze

## Who is Tedo Japaridze?

Tedo Japaridze was for a long time the Georgian Ambassador in Washington, serving there from 1994 -2002. In March 2002 he chaired the Georgian National Security Council. His televised speech in that capacity in November 2003 at the height of the "Rose Revolution" probably sealed the fate of the Shevardnadze government. Japaridze was appointed for a short time as Georgian foreign Minister after the revolution but did not see eye to eye with many of the leaders that emerged after those events and was removed in March 2004.

He retains respect in key elements within the international community, particularly the US. In 2011 he became a member of the core team of Bidzhina Ivanishvili's party, and subsequently of the Georgian Dream coalition.

# Governing Party MP to head the controversial State Audit Service in Georgia.

**On 23 July, the head of the State Audit Service (SAS) in Georgia, Levan Bezhashvili, handed in his resignation to parliament after four years in office citing his desire to aid the people of the storm battered region of Kakheti in Eastern Georgia.**

"I believe that at this time of difficulty it is my obligation to stand [...] by [the] residents of Kakheti region and help them in [the] relief efforts... so I have decided to quit this comfortable high post in Tbilisi," he announced.

Describing his resignation as a "courageous step" on July 25, President Saakashvili appointed Bezhashvili as his personal representative to coordinate the relief efforts in the region.

The move, surrounded by rhetoric of self-sacrifice and humility on the part of Bezhashvili, has sparked speculation that the former high-level civil servant, who hails from Kakheti region, will be named as a candidate for the ruling United National Movement (UNM) party in one of the single-mandate constituencies in Kakheti.

Before taking his post as the chief of the State Audit Service (formerly the Chamber of Control) in 2008, Bezhashvili was the Governor of Kakheti region for five months.

With 83 votes in favour, and only 2 opposed, parliament appointed Lasha Tordia, Member of Parliament for the UNM to a five-year term as the new head of the State Audit Service on July 25.

Tordia, who was first elected as a UNM proportional representative list member of parliament in 2008, has been chairperson of the parliamentary committee for human rights since December 2010.

A lawyer by training, Tordia worked as such for both the Public Registry Agency and the Association for the Protection of Landowners' Rights before entering public life.

The State Audit Service is responsible for scrutinising party financing regulations. It has come under heavy criticism in recent months by both local civil society and international observers specifically concerning the various investigations the SAS has launched into the opposition parties in Georgia, particularly the Georgian Dream coalition led by billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili. Critics have accused the State Audit Service of being biased and pro-government in its activities.

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe Needs Assessment Mission (OSCE-NAM) report released last month, underlined the increasing public outcry surrounding the activities of the State Audit Service. Though commending the intention to create an agency to ensure greater transparency, oversight and enforcement mechanisms with regard to the financing of political parties and campaigns, the OSCE-NAM report raised concerns about the discretionary authority granted to the SAS through the amendments to the Law on Political Unions of Citizens.

In response to these concerns, Tordia has stated that from now on he will renounce all party activities and conduct his new position in a manner "based on objectivity, independence, fairness and professionalism." The former UNM Member of Parliament expressed his plans to meet with political parties in order to avoid violations of the new party financing rules with the aim to end the need to impose sanctions and other coercive measures. "Let's work on a plan," he said. ■

## **Transparency International Georgia says diplomats in Washington are servicing the ruling party.**

In a statement posted on its web site on 27 July, Transparency International Georgia said it had obtained information that the Georgian Embassy in the United States has been sending political e-mails to people interested in the country, including influential American scholars and researchers. By doing so, the Embassy is trying to discredit both Bidzina Ivanishvili and the Georgian Dream political coalition. "We consider these actions as examples of using national resources to favor the ruling political party. Using the diplomatic corps to campaign for the ruling party and to damage the reputation of rival political parties within the country is unacceptable since such steps utterly contradict the common democratic practices," said the statement.

The statement added, "We received information regarding these political e-mails from two prominent American scholars. One of them presented us with e-mails sent to him by Khatuna Okroshidze, the second secretary of the Georgian Embassy to the United States. Okroshidze's first e-mail contains a translation from an Asaval-Dasavali newspaper article in which John Bass is referred to in a negative context. In the e-mail, the Georgian Embassy representative also writes that Asaval-Dasavali is Ivanishvili's favorite newspaper and it is famous for its xenophobic articles. Okroshidze's second e-mail, sent to another American scholar, contains excerpts from different Georgian newspapers stating the viewpoints of the Industry Will Save Georgia political party representatives. The Embassy representative notes in the same e-mail that this political party is known for its anti-western attitudes. This stance includes its opposition to Georgia's integration in NATO, its desire to create a Belarus-type isolated economy with Russia as Georgia's major trading partner, and its hope to become a Georgian Dream coalition member. This other American scholar wrote to us that he often receives similar e-mails from the Georgian Embassy in the United States.

We hold that such acts are blatant violations of Georgian legislation and that they oppose diplomatic practices as they are established in democracies. Under Article 15 of the Georgian Law on Diplomatic Service: "A person shall cease any kind of political activity from the moment of his/her appointment to a diplomatic position. During his/her employment in the Diplomatic Service, a diplomatic agent shall remain politically neutral and shall have no right to carry out activity/propaganda in favor of or against any political party, organization or union". Moreover, similar activities on behalf of the diplomatic service would have caused a serious scandal in other democratic countries. Subsequently, such activities should be avoided if we aspire to develop an advanced country.

Transparency International Georgia called on the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to examine the above facts, to take adequate measures and to not allow the diplomatic service to become politicized. It also called on the Intergovernmental Commission for Free and Fair Elections to react accordingly and to issue recommendations so as to prevent such actions from being repeated in the future.

Source: [www.transparency.ge](http://www.transparency.ge)

# Georgian Media outlets stand by Maestro TV demanding the authorities return all seized property.

**Following the seizure of over 16,000 TV satellite dishes from independent media firm Maestro TV, representatives of Georgian media and fans of the TV network have demonstrated an outpouring of support for the media provider and expressed condemnation of the government actions against Maestro TV.**

On Wednesday 25 July, Maestro TV supporters gathered outside the parliament building where they held a rally calling on the government to end immediately the confiscation of the dishes. Supporters held both real and fake satellite dishes, some with the words “Wanted, suspected of distributing free media” written on them.

The slogan refers to the accusation made by the Prosecutor’s Office that Maestro TV was planning to distribute the dishes free of charge, particularly in Georgia’s regions, in an effort to buy votes for the Georgian Dream coalition led by businessman Bidzina Ivanishvili.

Maestro TV has repeatedly denied the accusation and reiterated that the distribution of the dishes was to form part of the “Maestro in every home” campaign to increase viewership throughout the country. Currently, Maestro TV is mainly available in the capital region.

Protestors signed a large satellite dish at the rally which organisers said will be sent to the President of Georgia in solidarity with Maestro TV.

Lasha Tughushi, editor of Rezonanzi daily newspaper and a rally organiser, told Democracy and Freedom Watch that the protests will continue until the government’s actions are permanently reversed. In other words, until the dishes are returned to Maestro TV and the accusations are revoked.

Tughushi also helped organise the Coalition for Media Advocacy, a group of media workers who have launched two appeals to the Prosecutor’s Office to reverse the satellite dish seizure.

The group, said representative Tamar Kordzaia, believes that “freedom of speech, guaranteed by the Georgian Constitution, the Election Code, and several articles in the Law on Political Unions of Citizens were violated.”

Their second appeal, sent on Monday 23 July and addressed directly to both the Chief Prosecutor and the Minister of Justice, highlighted the coalition’s concern that the impounding of the satellite dishes represents an attempt by the authorities to limit the public’s access to diverse sources of information.



Maestro TV has confirmed that they have also launched an appeal into the Court’s decision and demanding the return of the seized property. If necessary, a representative stated, they will follow the process all the way to the European Court.

One rally attendee told Democracy and Freedom Watch that they attended the rally “to support the TV channel which I most prefer to watch among Georgian channels.” They echoed the sentiments of the organisers continuing “these actions are a shame for our government,” explaining that the government’s current bulldozing of free media sources demonstrates their intent to silence broadcasters with different views.

Both local and international actors expressed their dismay at the actions of the authorities last week. OSCE media freedom representative, Dunja Mijatovic conveyed her hope in a statement on 16 July that this incident “would not negatively impact the right of its viewers to freely receive information.”

The seizures of the Maestro TV dishes come on the heels of the impounding of tens of thousands of satellite dishes intended for distribution in a similar scheme by Global TV, a TV network in which Ivanishvili’s brother is the principal shareholder, at the end of June. ■

Report prepared by Karina Gould from Georgian media reports

# Empowering women politicians in Armenia.

**On Wednesday 25 July, Ambassador Andrey Sorokin, head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan announced a series of activities designed to encourage and increase the participation of women in Armenian public life.**

“Promoting women’s participation in economic and political spheres as well as inclusion in public life is an essential factor for ensuring democratic advancement. The positive effect women’s participation has on stability and security throughout society is undeniable,” said Sorokin.

According to Oliver McCoy, Democratisation Officer of the OSCE Office in Yerevan, the activities include seminars and workshops that will be led by experts from Armenia and other participating OSCE states with experience providing training related to political involvement.

The programme aims to provide training for up to one thousand female politicians, representatives of civil society, the media, and the general public from Yerevan and the regions in Armenia. In particular, the project organisers are targeting female politicians with an eye to encourage involvement amongst younger and first-time candidates. Participation is open to all interested individuals.

“The OSCE,” explained McCoy, “considers gender equality a priority throughout the organization and within all its activities.”

According to their website, the OSCE office in Yerevan will provide training on topics such as “best practices in advancing women as leaders, decision makers and candidates; in developing gender sensitive political platforms; campaigning effectively; and in working with the media.”

These activities will be carried out in partnership with Syunik Womens’ Resource Centre Network, ProMedia Gender NGO and the Armenian Association of Women with University Education, and the British Council in Armenia, says McCoy.

Ambassador Pieter Jan Langenberg of the Netherlands, which is providing financial support for the project, commenting on the NGOs involved, said “I’m impressed with the commitment and energy of the civil society representatives and believe their work at the community level will help ensure an increase in women’s participation during the local elections.”

The first series of workshops will take place already in August 2012. They will focus on an introduction to election-related legislation, particularly the Law on Local Self-Government Elections. Attention will also be given to general campaign-related issues in the first few sessions.

In June, the OSCE Office in Yerevan held a roundtable on women’s participation in politics in Armenia.

While Armenia has legislation requiring women to make up 20% of candidates on proportional representation lists, only 14 women were elected to parliament during the last electoral cycle. The quota system does not apply to the 41 constituency-based seats.

In light of the upcoming local self-government and presidential elections in 2012 and 2013 respectively, the encouragement and resources made available to increase women’s participation in Armenia are timely.

As McCoy notes, “Changing the overall perception and increasing the role of women in political life throughout Armenia is a challenge. This project aims to help address the challenge by creating a more receptive environment for women in politics and thereby providing opportunities that would not have existed otherwise.”

CEW Karina Gould interviewed Oliver McCoy, Democratization Officer at the OSCE Office in Yerevan about the programme.

## **1. How many women do you anticipate will participate in these activities?**

We expect that a total of up to 1,000 representatives of women politicians, civil society, media, general public are involved in the activities in Yerevan and regions of Armenia.

## **2. Who will be leading the seminars and activities? Will they be successful Armenian women or will you be bringing in female politicians and activists from abroad?**

The seminars and activities will be led by female and male experts, both from Armenia and other OSCE participating States, who have general experience organizing training courses on subjects related to political involvement. Local experts will be chosen based on their experience in Armenia and abroad.

## **3. When will the first activity be held, and what will be the topic?**

The first series of training courses will take place already in August 2012. An introduction to election-related legislation (i.e. the Law on Local Self Government / the Law on Local Self Government Elections) as well as general issues related to campaigning will be the first subjects addressed.

## **4. Are you also involving actors in civil society, if so, which ones?**

Yes. The organizations with which we are partnering in conducting this project are Syunik Womens’ Resource Centre Network; ProMedia Gender NGO and the Armenian Association of Women with University Education. We are also working with the British Council in Armenia.

## **5. Who are your target participants? Are they established female politicians or will the OSCE reach out to younger women as well?**

The target participants are female politicians. We are planning to include all interested candidates and especially to involve younger or first-time candidates to the largest degree possible.

## **6. Is there anything else you think I should know to provide a full picture on the OSCE activities?**

The OSCE considers gender equality a priority throughout the organization and within all its activities. Changing the overall perception and increasing the role of women in political life throughout Armenia is a challenge. This project aims to help address the challenge by creating a more receptive environment for women in politics and thereby providing opportunities that would not have existed otherwise. ■