



International Expert Center for Electoral Systems

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Elections Observation Mission

**Armenia,
Presidential Elections, 18 February 2013**

**Preliminary Report №2
20.12.12 - 15.02.13**

February 15, 2013
Yerevan

1. General Provisions

The Elections Observation Mission to monitor the presidential elections in Armenia to be held on February 18, 2013 was officially accredited by the Central Elections Committee (CEC) of Armenia on December 26, 2012.

The International Expert Center for Electoral Systems ("ICES") is a public non-governmental and non-profit organization founded in 2005 by a group of political scientists and attorneys, with its main office in Maastricht, the Netherlands. ICES is registered by the United Nations and is included in the list of international non-governmental organizations endorsing the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the Code of Conduct for International Observers adopted by the UN in 2005. The Mission's methodology, organization and work are based on and are carried out in accordance with the guidelines provided by the above Declaration.

The Mission is comprised of 35 independent experts, including attorneys and former diplomats, political scientists, media representatives and members of European and National Parliaments representing 10 countries of the European Union, the United States and Israel. The Mission is headed by Dr. Alexander Tsinker, ICES President and former Knesset member of the XVth convocation. Funding is provided by the ICES Center as part of its work on "Monitoring the process of democratization in the post-Soviet area."

The Mission's approach to monitoring the Elections was two-fold. As the first step, the Mission carried out a study and analysis of the Armenian Constitution, of the Electoral Code and the pre-election situation in the country as well as the work of the Armenian mass media. The Mission also analyzed the work of the CEC in its preparation for the elections. The Mission presented its findings in this regard in its Preliminary Report on December 25, 2012 which is available on the ICES website.

As the second step, a group of 8 long-term observers commenced their work in Armenia in January of 2013. These 8 experts focused on the pre-election campaign while a group of our political scientists continued to study and analyze the implementation of the current electoral law, the work of the CEC and the work of the Armenian mass media.



2. General Remarks

The ICES mission has given a generally positive review of the work conducted by the governmental bodies (police, the court system, etc) during the pre-election campaign. The petitions filed by Armenian citizens in regards to possible violations of the electoral law were dealt with promptly, and effective measures were taken in accordance with the country's existing electoral regulations.

The Mission would like to highlight the high level of professionalism demonstrated by the Central Elections Commission which in conducting its work took into consideration all the remarks made by the international organizations during the parliamentary elections conducted last year.

In particular, the CEC has verified the voter registration lists in order to confirm the personal data of Armenian citizens having the right to vote. The voter registration lists were published well in advance of the elections in order to duly inform the public. The work of the CEC during the pre-election campaign was characterized by its transparency and accessibility to the voters.

The Mission notes that along with the effective work of the authorities to prevent electoral violations and the professional work of the CEC, according to certain observations made to the Mission, it was also important to address alleged attempts by certain city officials to prevent opposition deputies from meeting with the local population.

The Mission welcomes the commitment of the Armenian government to invite the maximum number of international observers to assess the level of organization and the carrying out of the presidential elections. The presence of a large number of accredited international observer missions suggests that the international community is paying close attention to the process of building a democratic civil society in Armenia.

The ICES Mission takes note of the provision in the Armenian electoral law which does not allow Armenian citizens to vote in the presidential elections abroad. However, Armenian citizens temporarily residing abroad who wish to exercise their right to vote and have returned to Armenia to participate in the elections should be given the opportunity to cast their vote even if they currently reside outside the country.

In spite of the physical attack on one of the presidential candidates, the Mission notes that the pre-election campaign between the presidential candidates was relatively calm, in spite of some unnecessary and unsubstantiated accusations. The debate between the candidates



mainly focused on the political problems of the country, on ways to improve the lives of Armenian citizens, and on civil reforms. At the same time, the experts note that some candidates focused primarily on self-promotion. We note that some candidates did not even bother to present their election platforms for public discussion and there were no televised open debates conducted between the candidates.

The ICES experts also note the lack of electoral advertisement in the country. Many of the billboards intended for the campaign posters were left unused, while the presidential candidates focused their efforts on holding numerous press conferences.

The Mission notes that the coverage of the electoral campaign by the Armenian mass media was broad and diversified. According to the observers, there was relative equality in the total coverage of the election process, both in print and in electronic media. Taking into consideration some shortcomings in the work of the mass media as well as the fairly high level of their engagement, the ordinary voter was able to get the full range of opinions and assessments in regards to all party lists, ensuring therefore pluralism and democracy in the coverage of the electoral process.

3. Elections Day and the Vote Counting

According to the conducted analysis and based on the fairly high number of our experts, the Mission formed 11 teams of short-term observers to monitor the election day and the vote counting. These teams have been dispatched to the following cities in Armenia:

- Yerevan;
- Gyumri;
- Vanadzor;
- Artashat;
- Ashtarak;
- Abovyan;
- Armavir;
- Razdan;
- Charentsavan;
- Echmiadzin.



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On election day, the Mission will proceed to the monitoring of the voting process itself and the post-election vote counting and will fill out the questionnaires designed to assess the following:

- The readiness of the polling stations to conduct the voting process (the county election committees, the availability of the transparent ballot boxes and of equipped voting cabins, etc.);
- The overall organization of the voting process (polling stations opening on schedule, secrecy of the vote, prohibition to vote without identifying documents and other personal data or using someone else's identification documents, ensuring public safety inside and outside the polling stations, non-existence of political campaigning on the voting premises, etc.);
- Adherence to the electoral law during vote counting and filling out the protocols as required by the regulations and securing the safe keeping and transport of ballots and protocols from polling stations to the regional election c\committees).

During the election day and the post-election vote counting, all data gathered from our teams of observers dispatched to the above-mentioned cities will be consolidated at the Mission's headquarters located in Yerevan at the Congress Hotel. The data will be processed and analyzed by our experts. In addition, the Mission plans to exchange its findings and share the information collected by its experts with other accredited international missions. This will increase the amount of information supplied to the headquarters and will provide a more accurate picture of the electoral process.

Based on the results of its observations, the Mission will provide its assessment of the level of overall competence demonstrated by the actors of the electoral process in Armenia. The Mission will present its final report on the democratic and transparent character of the 2013 presidential elections at a press conference to be held in Yerevan at the Congress Hotel on February 19, 2013 at 11:00AM.



4. Conclusions

- The Mission notes that despite the active political competition between the presidential candidates' staffs and the unfortunate events related to the assault on one of the participants of the electoral process, the campaign was carried out in a relatively calm atmosphere, without excessive intolerance on behalf of the competing parties.
- The Mission notes that, considering the efficient and professional work of electoral committees of all levels during the election day and the post-election vote counting process, the violations registered during the monitoring of the pre-election campaign cannot significantly influence the outcome of the elections.
- The final evaluation and conclusions of the Mission on the democratic and transparent character of the presidential elections will be made only upon completion of the electoral process.

The Mission's reports are available in the English and Russian languages, each being an official document.