



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

STATEMENT ON THE SITUATION IN ARMENIA

As delivered by Ambassador Guttorm Vik
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 6, 2008

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

Let me first commend the Chairmanship for its prompt initiative to send Special Envoy Ambassador Talvitie to help defuse the crises in Armenia. We fully support these and similar efforts. Norway also welcomes the statement of the EU Presidency on the situation in Armenia, which Norway is aligned with.

Norway condemns the use of violence against peaceful demonstrators. We are deeply troubled by the deaths and injuries that occurred during the unrest 1 March. Now measures must be taken urgently to create the conditions for a peaceful dialogue between the government and the opposition.

First, the state of emergency should be lifted. A meaningful dialogue can only take place if there is freedom of assembly, freedom of political parties and freedom of the media. We therefore regret the suspension of the work of the independent media and agree fully with the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Mr Miklos Haraszti, that the state of emergency should not be used by the government to take away the public's right to news from diverse sources

Second, politically motivated arrests and other forms of repression must stop and those detained must be released. My government also agrees with Ambassador Talvitie that those who commit crimes should be prosecuted, whether they are civilians or police. There is a need for a credible, transparent investigation of the 1 March events.

Norway urges the government of Armenia to fulfil its OSCE commitments and duties to protect all of its citizens and their rights, and to engage in a meaningful dialogue with the opposition to find viable ways out of the crisis. We also call on the opposition parties to act peacefully and within the law, and on both sides to show restraint and to resolve their political differences within democratic institutions. Only in this way will Armenia be able to resume the process of democratic reforms. As a country with longstanding friendly relations with the Armenian people, Norway stands ready to extend its support to this process.

Finally, let me recall that ODIHR's mandate is to observe "before, during and **after** elections". In the current situation, it is of utmost importance that complaints and observed irregularities are followed up, so that a full and fair picture can be established. We encourage Armenian authorities to cooperate fully with ODIHR in establishing the final report, as well as any interim reports, on the elections. We also urge them to make full use of the expertise and support offered by the ODIHR to redress shortcomings and improve the system for future elections.

Thank you Mr. Chairman