



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**NORWAY IN RESPONSE TO THE REPORT BY THE HEAD OF THE OSCE
OFFICE IN YEREVAN, AMBASSADOR KAPINOS**

As delivered by Ambassador Guttorm Vik
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
5 June, 2008

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

Norway warmly welcomes Ambassador Sergey Kapinos to the Permanent Council, and thanks him for his excellent report, which provides us with a comprehensive overview of the Office's broad range of activities in all three dimensions, as well as of the current situation in Armenia.

Norway fully shares the report's analysis of the background for the crisis following the presidential elections in February and the assessment of the present situation. Also, we commend the Office's emphasis on its role in assisting the authorities and Armenian society at large in overcoming the internal polarization. In this context, we welcome the recent declarations by President Sargsyan referred to in Ambassador Kapinos' introduction. The close cooperation of the Office with both the Armenian authorities and civil society in defining and implementing its programmes is of particular value in this perspective.

However, the task at hand is not easy. There is a disappointing lack of appreciable progress in important areas of overcoming the effects of the crisis. Last week, the Monitoring Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe expressed its concern that so far there are only a few tangible results regarding compliance with the demands of the Assembly as set out in PACE Resolution 1609. Norway urges the Armenian authorities to redouble their efforts towards meeting the standards of both the OSCE and the Council of Europe and to avail themselves fully of the cooperation the Office can offer in this context.

Now, a few remarks on the main points of the report: The ODIHR's election monitoring final report concluded that there was an apparent lack of political will in Armenia to implement the legal provisions of the election-related laws during the February elections. Free and fair elections are essential to the development of a real democracy, and we therefore urge the Office to continue its election-related activities in cooperation with the authorities as well as with the ODIHR.

We commend the Office for its human rights monitoring activities, especially with regard to the monitoring of trials of individuals arrested for their alleged involvement in the violence of 1 March. We are also pleased to note that the Office facilitated discussion between experts from the ODIHR, the Venice Commission and the Chairman of the Armenian National Assembly on the 17 March amendments to the law on Conducting Meetings, Assemblies, Rallies and Demonstrations, amendments which would restrict the right to freedom of assembly. It is encouraging that the talks resulted in an agreement to revoke the restrictions on the right to freedom of assembly. We expect the changes to be finally adopted soon. Norway is also highly supportive of the Office's project on supporting the freedom of assembly, once the current law is amended.

We strongly support the Office's assistance to the Human Rights Defender's Office (the Ombudsman), including in its capacity to assist in the treatment of election-related complaints. We support the Office's efforts to encourage the Armenian government to build on the reforms carried out in the areas of criminal justice reform, freedom of the media and access to information. The police assistance programme is an activity that Norway holds in high regard. The community policing programme that was introduced in 2007 is an example of the value that the OSCE brings with it to a host country. We agree with Ambassador Kapinos that democratic policing is closely linked with the modernisation of the curriculum of the Police educational institutions and we are pleased to note that the Office is aiming at extending its activities in the Police academies in the years to come. These activities have not become less important, bearing in mind the tragic events of 1 March.

In closing, let me wish Ambassador Kapinos and his highly competent and dedicated staff all the best in their further efforts.

Thank you Mr. Chairman