



# **PARTNERSHIP FOR OPEN SOCIETY**

## **ACTIVITY REPORT**

**2007-2008**

[www.partnership.am](http://www.partnership.am)



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## INTRODUCTION AND COUNTRY CONTEXT

The Partnership is aimed at developing democratic institutions in Armenia and promoting open society values--rule of law, independent professional media, and effective mechanisms of protection of human rights, including rights of minority groups and exercise of civil liberties. It was initiated by an active group of civil society actors to address the need to strengthen the advocacy mechanisms in the country for a wide range of issues, and is now a coalition of sixty non-governmental organizations. This free association of locally committed groups includes a diverse membership united around three guiding aims: to promote the process of coherent and conclusive democrat reform; to discuss and develop alternative advocacy solutions for increased democratic governance; and to raise public awareness and public education for increased civic participation.

The Partnership organizations work together to bring visibility to political developments in the country and their consequences and to offer their viewpoints and recommendations on a wide range of areas that constitute the Partnership priority areas. The collective advocacy capacity of the POS is used to bring these issues to the attention of public at large and the decision-makers and to advocate for democratic reforms and policy-level changes.

The past two years were trying and difficult years for the country as it went through two elections and witnessed the post-presidential election aftermath. Partnership activities were shaped in response to the political situation in the country and the subsequent crisis. Unexpected and massive repressions, excessive restrictions over media, civic participation, political freedoms, imposed by the state of emergency after the post-election crisis, served as eye-opener for the international community. The reaction of the COE, EU, OSCE, UN and the US Administration was strong and unprecedentedly coherent and adequate. The international community requested quick and effective measures to restore normalcy and follow democratic norms. A set of measures and suggestions were outlined in numerous communiqués and statements by official structures and international civil society<sup>1</sup>. However, despite all the international pressure, the problems were not properly addressed, and there are still outstanding human rights problems in the country. In this context, the role of the Partnership became even more important as a venue for alternative policy formulation, public debate and education of general public on the political processes in the country.

The Partnership has developed into an effective and trusted body capable of suggesting advocacy solutions for increased democratic governance through the collective advocacy of more than 60 members. The increasing number of POS members, representing different areas, and the increased policy capacity within the Foundation's programs allow the POS to engage in a wide spectrum of issues and be adequately represented in the majority of its areas of concern, particularly those related to democratic institution building and promotion of open society values, i.e. rule of law, independent professional media, acknowledgement and effective mechanisms for protection of human rights, including rights of minority groups.

In 2007 and 2008, just like in 2006, the POS went beyond its traditional role of raising public awareness on important political, social and economic issues, and developing alternative policy suggestions. Instead, it continued implementing rigorous monitoring activities, using monitoring as a tool to advocate for real reforms in the country. Seeing MCA and ENP as more than two large-scale important programs

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<sup>1</sup> PACE Resolutions 1609 and 1620

and more as an opportunity to advance democracy in Armenia, the Partnership continued monitoring MCA and ENP implementation in 2007 and 2008 respectively. Monitoring was used as a solid tool to bring up important issues to the attention of all relevant stakeholders – the public, international organizations, as well as the national organizations and the government. While these monitoring works were continued from the previous year, just like the democracy monitoring along the ENP criteria and media monitoring during the pre-election and election periods, the Partnership's monitoring efforts largely expanded these two years to also include army monitoring, parliament monitoring and court monitoring.

The events of 2008 changed the country, and the civil society faces new realities that it did not face before, such as the internationally accepted fact of existence of political prisoners in the country, as a result of massive arrests of opposition members before and after March 1 events and hall denials to civil society organizations for holding events.

The Partnership continued holding events to raise public awareness on important social and political developments and initiate debate between the civil society and the government representatives. Due to the fact that Partnership events get little, if any, coverage by media (this especially refers to TV coverage) and virtually no government representatives attend the events, Partnership, while continuing the tradition of public events, has limited their number, and instead has focused more on advocacy inside and outside the country to pressure the government to carry out meaningful reforms vs. superficial quick fixes.

The Partnership has also issued a number of statements, the last one reflecting our concern with the fact that hotels have been under a clear instruction from the government not to rent out premises for events held by the critical civil society.

More information about the Partnership for Open Society and its activities is available on the Partnership's web-site at [www.partnership.am](http://www.partnership.am).

## **PARLIAMENTARY AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS**

2007 and 2008 were two important years for Armenia as they were marked by Parliamentary and Presidential elections. In this respect, Partnership resources coupled with the Foundation's Civil Society, Media and Law Programs were directed at making the pre-election and election periods more transparent and accountable to the public as well as creating a forum for discussion of critical issues for the country.

The Yerevan Press Club, a leading media NGO in the Partnership, conducted media monitoring of the pre-election process revealing an obvious bias in coverage and a number of violations. A number of Partnership members observed the elections both in the capital and the regions. Their documentation of violations and fraud formed the basis for the civil society's negative assessment of the elections.

Transparency International Anti-Corruption Center monitored the party campaign finances during the parliamentary elections and abuse of administrative resource by the executive branch of power during the presidential elections. The existing complete control over the media did not allow for a meaningful and in-depth discussion and debate in the pre-election period on the party platforms during the parliamentary elections and among the presidential candidates during the presidential election, in order to fill in this gap of objective information and expert analysis the Foundation, with co-funding from the UNDP, funded TV debates on one of the popular TV channels. During the debates the Partnership experts presented their expert analysis on the issues raised, as well as platforms of parties and candidates. Another joint project with the UNDP was development of the E-channel project, the only analytical portal in Armenia, which regularly provided the online community with news and resources on the parliamentary elections, implemented by Internews, also a Partnership member.

For the first time comprehensive analysis was conducted of the platforms of major political parties by a group of journalists and Partnership experts and presented to the general public. As a logical continuation of this project, a pilot project was developed to monitor the activity of the elected political parties in the National Assembly, taking a close look at the work of the political parties and comparing them against their platforms.

The violence that followed the presidential elections came as a shock, but the overall developments confirmed the warnings of the critical civil society regarding the continuous retreat from democratic governance and lack of improvement in human rights, media and free speech, rule of law, judiciary and free and fair administration of elections. The tragic events that followed the presidential elections were the result of the culmination of the continuous "democracy deficit" in Armenia.

The response from the civil society to the human rights crisis was not adequate, mostly due to political affiliations and lack of capacity to act under emergency situations. As the course of events unfolded, the only adequate response came from the Partnership and long-term partners of the Foundation. Through the Partnership a number of legal issues were addressed, and legal representation of political detainees and monitoring of court hearings of their cases were secured.

## **MONITORING AND ADVOCACY**

### **Advocacy and Lobbying in Country and Abroad**

The Partnership remains the only civil society coalition carrying out successful advocacy efforts for legislative change, providing expert analysis to potentially harmful pieces of legislation and creating a forum for debate on potentially harmful pieces of legislation that may have serious human rights implications. Among the highlights of the Partnership's advocacy efforts in 2007 and 2008 were the 3 documents prepared by Partnership experts related to ENP implementation in 2007 and 2008 (see more details in the ENP section of the report), which were widely used as advocacy tools. A core Partnership group took the documents - containing analysis, critique and recommendations - to Brussels on three occasions, after each report, and met with respective officials of the European Commission to have the civil society opinion on ENP implementation in Armenia heard. The European Commission's report, albeit positive overall, did substantially use the material prepared by Partnership experts. In its lobbying and advocacy efforts the Partnership extensively drew on the results of its monitoring efforts. The following monitoring efforts were carried out by Partnership in 2007 and 2008 respectively.

### **Media Monitoring – Parliamentary Elections, Presidential Elections**

The Yerevan Press Club, a leading media NGO in the Partnership, conducted media monitoring of the pre-election process and revealed serious bias in coverage and violations.

*By Yerevan Press Club and "TEAM" Research Center*

The Yerevan Press Club and "TEAM" Research Center, with the support of the Open Society Institute Foundation Armenia, conducted monitoring of the coverage by Armenian media of parliamentary elections in 2007 and presidential elections in 2008. The monitoring covered both official election campaigns, i.e. the period covered in legal regulations and during which international observers follow the behavior of leading media, and periods preceding those campaigns when most typical problems with independence and engagement of media become more evident and which are out of the scope of regulation and, therefore, get little attention from international observers.

During the parliamentary elections 18 media (14 broadcast and 4 print) were monitored, and 8 broadcast media were monitored during the presidential elections.

The monitoring objectives were to determine and define the following:

- the effectiveness of the legislative regulation of media during and before the elections;
- the level of attention of media of Armenia to the elections;
- the adequacy of the media in informing the electorate about politicians, presidential candidates;
- the accessibility of TV and radio air for politicians/parties/candidates to express their views and opinions.

To achieve this, qualitative and quantitative monitoring methods were applied. The qualitative monitoring included study of the legislation and other official documents, related to the election process in Armenia, meetings with media heads, journalists, politicians and the public, as well as analysis of their public statements regarding media activities during the pre-election period. The quantitative monitoring included direct measurement of media publications and programs.

Monitors recorded the references, their connotations/nature (positive, negative, neutral), as well as the airtime/newspaper space, allocated to parties/candidates, running in the elections. Both intermediate (on decade basis) and final findings of the studies were presented in press-conferences. Final reports were also published in brochures, containing other materials on media in elections as well.

The monitoring and broad publicizing of findings had quite a strong impact due to the following:

1. They identified problems existing in Armenian media and helped search ways of addressing them (both in the course of the election campaigns and after them);
2. The monitoring reports contained assessment of the work of state agencies entitled to ensure proper implementation of media legislation in the course of elections, thus allowing to raise important issues on the administration of elections;
3. Local and international organizations implementing observation of elections received reliable information on the role of media in the electoral process;
4. The recommendations based on the studies helped improve the Armenian electoral legislation;
5. The analyses contained in the reports made it possible to develop training programs for practicing journalists, as well as contribute to the development and improvement of curricula for journalism schools;
6. The monitoring data served as material for court proceedings where results of the elections were disputed. The RA Constitutional Court in its judgment and Human Rights Defender in his statement on elections referred to the YPC/"Team" monitoring reports;
7. The monitoring and the findings helped civil society make its advocacy agenda in the field of media more concrete.

The monitoring was in the focus of attention of the media community, public, political circles and international observers. They were extensively covered by media, extensively quoted and became an important factor in the public and political life of Armenia, thus, contributing to the democratization of the country.

### **Party Campaign Finance Monitoring**

Transparency International Anti-Corruption Center monitored party campaign finances during the parliamentary elections and abuse of administrative resource by the executive branch of power during the presidential elections.

*By Transparency International*

During 2007 parliamentary and 2008 presidential elections in Armenia Transparency International Anti-corruption Center (TI AC) with support of OSI conducted monitoring of election campaign expenditures and misuse of administrative resources. Both monitoring projects have been implemented in the cities of Yerevan, Gyumri and Vanadzor. In Gyumri and Vanadzor they were implemented by TI AC partner local NGOs – “Asparez” Journalists’ Club and Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly Vanadzor Office, respectively. The methodologies applied in both projects are the adapted (for Armenian conditions) versions of methodologies of campaign expenditure and misuse of administrative resources monitoring described in Open Society Justice Initiative’s “Monitoring Election Campaign Finance: *A Handbook for NGOs*” handbook, published in 2005. (The adapted Armenian translation of the selected chapters of the Handbook will be published by TI AC at the beginning of 2009.)

The goal of the monitoring was to promote transparency and accountability in political party finance, reveal the problems and shortcomings in the current legislation regulating campaign finance in Armenia and document possible violations and abuses of law during election campaign. The TI AC monitoring teams monitored all major campaign expenditure items, such as advertising in mass media, preparing and placing other campaign materials (posters, banners, brochures, etc.), expenditures on organizing campaign events (rallies, outdoor and indoor meetings, marches and others).

As a result of monitoring it was revealed that both in 2007 parliamentary and 2008 presidential elections certain parties and presidential candidates exceeded the upper limits of expenses set by law for the electoral funds of parties and presidential candidates (60 mln. and 70 mln. AMD, respectively). In 2007 parliamentary elections those were the Republican Party of Armenia and *Bargavatch Hayastan* (Prosperous Armenia) Party and in 2008 presidential elections – presidential candidates Serge Sargsyan and Vahan Hovhannisyan. As for the remaining parties and presidential candidates, though the monitoring did not reveal such exceeds, it found out discrepancies between the amounts of expenditures figured in the electoral funds final declarations that they submitted to the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) and posted on CEC web-site, and amounts monitored by TI AC. During the implementation of these monitoring projects, the monitors, as well as project staff received many signals, indicating widespread vote buying, mainly by ruling parties and their presidential candidates. However, because the witnesses avoided testifying, it was impossible to officially document these facts and calculate these types of “expenses.”

Among the typical manifestations of misuse of administrative resources during campaign one can mention campaigning of public officials, including the high-ranking ones, during their working hours, use of office equipment and vehicles for campaign purposes, exerting pressure on state employees to vote for ruling parties or their presidential candidates, etc.

An important impact of these monitoring efforts is that the results of the monitoring were used by some opposition parties and presidential candidates in their appeals to the Armenian Constitutional Court to dispute the results of the elections.

TI AC will publish a report on the results of its monitoring projects in the first quarter of 2009.

## European Neighbourhood Policy

The Partnership has acknowledged the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) as an exceptional opportunity for implementation of democratic, political, economic, and social reforms in Armenia retained its leading role in formulating the civil society's position on implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy Program (ENP). In our view, introducing the Eastern Partnership format will give a further impetus to the ENP in general and to its political component in particular. We believe that this differentiated approach towards the ENP countries that brings together a group of the Council of Europe members promises a more consistent approach to the democratization agenda of the Action Plans in conformity with the CoE standards and obligations.

The POS has had a systemic engagement with the ENP process in Armenia. Since the early stages of the ENP in Armenia, i.e. development of the Country Report, the POS has been keen to promote and support the ENP process. The POS organized a public discussion of the Country Report and the outlined priorities, and then took on an active role in conceptualizing and developing the Action Plan (AP). Despite the fact that cooperation of civil society with the responsible government agencies did not take place, POS members, with the support of the Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation – Armenia, embarked on analysis of certain priority areas and development of suggestions for the AP. As a result, a package of suggestions<sup>2</sup> in the areas of rule of law, judiciary, local government, human rights and fundamental freedoms, freedom of information, media and expression, information society, minorities and regional cooperation was prepared and distributed to the government of Armenia, the European Commission (EC) and the Armenian public. It was encouraging to see that some of the suggestions did get included in the final AP, countersigned in 2006.

Since then POS has reflected on each step of the ENP AP development, reinforcing its initial position that the ENP process must be an inclusive process, open to all stakeholders. Thus, civil society experts analyzed the Implementation Tools for 2007, prepared by the Armenian government and made public in September of 2007, comparing it against the AP, and made concrete recommendations<sup>3</sup> on making the process of planning and implementation efficient, thorough and accountable to the stakeholders. One year into the implementation of the AP, the civil society experts reviewed the progress in implementation of actions in certain priority areas in 2007 and developed a set of recommendations<sup>4</sup> for both the Armenian government and their counterparts in the EC before the EC issued the Progress Report. The experts were critical of the overall positive assessment by the EC in the Progress Report for Armenia in April 2008, especially since the report made a reference to parliamentary and presidential elections. As a result, a formal review<sup>5</sup> was conducted comparing the civil society experts' view on progress in key areas to POS and the EC assessment.

In November 2008 the experts prepared their viewpoint on the progress the country made in some priority areas. While the methodology of the monitoring was the same, the process was different due to the absence of Implementation Tools for 2008. Since the existing draft document was not shared with

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<sup>2</sup>“Conceptual Recommendations on ENP-Armenia Action Plan ,” 2005, available on [www.partnership.am](http://www.partnership.am)

<sup>3</sup>“Analysis of 2007 Implementation Tools of the ENP Action Plan ,” 2007, available on [www.partnership.am](http://www.partnership.am)

<sup>4</sup>“European Neighbourhood Policy and Armenia's Reform Agenda, ”2008, available on [www.partnership.am](http://www.partnership.am)

<sup>5</sup>“Civil Society Experts Assessment of Progress Report Armenia “Implementation of the European Neighborhood Policy in 2007”, 2008, available on [www.partnership.am](http://www.partnership.am)

the civil society and has been officially a closed document, our point of reference was the AP and the Implementation Tools 2007, in view of the fact that most of the activities in Implementation Tools for 2007 were not implemented.

## **MCA-Armenia Compact**

The Partnership continued its active and systematic engagement in monitoring MCA-Armenia Compact implementation, the only development project in the country directly conditioned on the country's democratic performance. Two of the Partnership partner organizations were involved in MCA monitoring activities. Transparency International Anti-Corruption Center monitored procurement, and the Community Finance Officers monitored the implementation of the pilot road construction project.

Until September, 2008 the Partnership, through three of its organizations, "Asparez" Journalists' Club, Helsinki Citizens Assembly and Sakharov Fund, had a direct representation in the MCA's Stakeholders' Committee, a consultative body, which ensures civil society participation in the Program's implementation and represents different stakeholder groups. These organizations were engaged in large scale advocacy efforts taking the MCA implementation debate and information outside the capital and ensuring that the voice of direct beneficiaries of the project was present in the decision-making process. Throughout their membership, they raised the serious issue of conflict of interest existing in the Stakeholders' Committee and the Governing Council and fought against it, however, seeing the strong resistance from the rest of the Committee members and adherence to doing business as usual, these organizations resigned from the Committee after they had issued a statement explaining their decision (see the statement in the respective section).

## **Road Construction Monitoring**

The Community Finance Officers NGO monitored the implementation of the pilot road construction project.<sup>6</sup>

*By Community Finance Officers*

With support from the Open Society Institute Armenia Assistance Foundation, the Association of Community Finance Officers (ACFO) implemented a project to monitor road construction works under the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) Armenia Program.

The Project started in December 2006 and was due to end in nine months; however the Project was postponed and ended in October 2008. The postponement of the Project was mainly due to the MCA's delay in starting the road construction works and some technical holdups, such as the preparation of the design and budget package (DBP), the temporary pause in construction activities over the winter season, etc.

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<sup>6</sup> "Road Construction Works Monitoring under the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) Armenia Program," 2008, will be available on [www.partnership.am](http://www.partnership.am) after it has been published.

At the start of the monitoring, the MCA had DBPs only for two segments of one road and had finalized the tender for construction only for those segments. Therefore, our monitoring only focused on the following segments of the Armavir-Isahakyan-Gyumri motorway (H-17):

1. km 49+300 – km 60+960 (“First Segment”); and
2. km 60+960 – km 73+780 (“Second Segment”).

It is important to note that both of these segments are part of the Armavir-Isahakyan-Gyumri motorway, the reconstruction of which began years before with funding from the State Budget of Armenia and the Lincy Fund.

These segments were initially included in the Lincy Fund’s road construction project, but were later terminated due to the scarcity of funds. However, the Talin Road Construction Company, which was awarded the tender for those segments at the time, received money (60+60 million drams) from the client and performed some rehabilitation on the First and Second Segments (including repairs of some pot-holes and a bridge, and restoration of some shoulders). Though the funding for the two segments was disbursed evenly, the contractor did not distribute them equally between the two segments, because the company performing the construction was the same for both segments, and it did not matter which segment the money was spent on.

Later, these road segments were included in the Millennium Challenge Account Armenia Program and submitted for tender under separate lots. The winning company (a company different from the previous one) was awarded the tender for both segments (US \$1.8 and 1.84 million). The following question arises: what would happen, if different companies were awarded the contracts for the First and Second Segments, given the significant difference in works to be performed on each segment (due to the uneven distribution of funding between the two segments by the previous contractor), while the funding amounts for the two segments were roughly the same? Currently, with the same contractor awarded the contract for both segments, the difference can be supplemented. However, this circumstance casts some doubt on the efficiency of the procurement procedures.

Once the new construction starts, it will be extremely difficult to determine whether the works performed are the “new” works or the “old” works: it will be hard to tell whether any given portion of the work was performed with state budget and Lincy Fund resources or with funding from MCA Armenia.

The current road was built in the 1970s with parameters of a II-category road. It has had no capital repairs since. This is why the width of the carriageable part and the land shoulder varies greatly at different places. The width of the carriageable part fluctuates between 7.8 and 8.4 meters, while that of the shoulders varies from 1.0 to 3.5 meters. According to the designed reconstruction, the carriageable part and shoulder width discrepancies will remain, and the road will not be assigned any category due to the width deviations from standards.

Our and the client’s monitoring has showed that the average intensity of traffic on these road segments has been 122 vehicles per day in recent years. In other words, there has been no increase in traffic. Even if one assumes a 10% annual increase in the intensity of traffic on the road segments in question,

average daily traffic intensity will not exceed 750 vehicles in 20 years: this corresponds to the standard for a IV-category road.

In terms of road width and pavement construction, the package prepared by the “Road Design” LLC (“ChanNakhagits”) and accepted by the client in 2007 was designed for III-category road, which was the cause of additional costs. These segments could have been designed as IV-category roads, and money saved could have been used on other roads.

The geographic position of the road segments, as shown in Figure 1 below, is such that they have a strategic importance as a key road replacing the main highway that links the second largest city in the country (Gyumri) with the capital city. The Armavir-Isahakyan-Gyumri motorway passes along the Armenia-Turkey state border, and having this motorway in a good shape also has psychological importance for the public. Nevertheless, the reconstruction of this road cannot be expected to produce significant economic gains. It is not attractive for existing traffic flows, as it is longer and has a lower category (in terms of quality) than the roads currently used. Parallel to this road, there is a railway in the same direction, which is more affordable for both passenger and cargo traffic, and meets the transport needs of several small communities alongside the road.<sup>7</sup>

These factors cast doubt on the cost-efficiency of major capital investments in the respective segments of the Armavir-Isahakyan-Gyumri motorway.

These segments are the least cargo-intensive segments of the Armavir-Gyumri road. Parallel to the road, there is a railway, which has become much more active in recent years in the area of cargo transportation. Therefore, one should not expect a significant increase in road traffic in either the short or long run. Hence, it would be appropriate to seek another option for restoring the pavement on this road,<sup>8</sup> which would meet the designed 20-year service need with smaller capital investments and less costly ongoing maintenance.

According to the design package prepared by the “Road Design” LLC (“ChanNakhagits”) in 2007, the rehabilitation of the First and Second Segments would require pot-hole repairs of 4,633 m<sup>2</sup> and whole-width pavement rehabilitation of 8,502 m<sup>2</sup>. A year later, in 2008, our (ACFO) experts estimated that the total volume of road works would be 14,629 m<sup>2</sup>. While this discrepancy could be due to the deterioration of the road during the 2007-2008 harsh winter, it could also be due to errors in the initial design. This factor will influence the volume and capital cost of road works needed.

This and other details of our monitoring work can be found in the full report on [www.partnership.am](http://www.partnership.am)

### **Public Procurement Monitoring**

As public procurement accounts for about 60-70% of the GDP in the country, public monitoring of procurement practices becomes rather critical for ensuring transparency and accountability of government spending. The Compact of \$235.65 million assistance envisions procurement of a bulk of

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<sup>7</sup> There are five rural communities alongside the road segments subject to reconstruction: Aghin, Haikadzor, Bagravan, Tlik, and Getap. Besides, three settlements (Kharkov, Jrapi, and Anipemza) are connected with the road, though not immediately adjacent to it.

<sup>8</sup> For example, pavement pot-hole repairs and surface processing.

services and works, particularly related to construction. The latter field experiences the highest risks of corruption throughout the world in accordance to TI AC data. Therefore, TI continued monitoring of procurement under the Compact.

*By Transparency International Anti-Corruption Center*

Throughout 2007 Transparency International Anti-corruption Center (TI AC) with support of OSI Assistance Foundation Armenia conducted monitoring of the public procurement in Armenia in order to foster transparency, accountability and participation in this field. Monitoring efforts were directed towards two targets – the national procurement system in Armenia and Millennium Challenge Account Armenia program.

National public procurement system was reviewed based on the Mapping Public Procurement System (MaPPS) methodology developed by Transparency International (TI) - designed to identify and measure corruption risks within the system. The study was conducted based on 139 indicators, grouped in four categories - institutional, perception, performance and context. Institutional indicators were monitored through legal research, perception indicators – a focus group discussion and the review of 43 procurement packages in several fields, performance indicators – through the statistical information received from the Ministry of Finance and Economy of RA and context indicators– based on reports of international organizations, such as the Global Competitiveness Report and Economic Freedom of the World Report.

The review of legislation and institutions showed relatively low levels of corruption risks, while higher levels of risks were seen in the actual practice and the general context of the political system, bureaucracy and judiciary in Armenia. TI AC developed a set of recommendations to increase transparency of operations, target prevention and control of corruption.

The second part of monitoring targeted public procurement conducted by the MCA-Armenia program - designed by TI AC to observe and evaluate the transparency and the compliance of procurement operations to the Compact signed between the Millennium Challenge Corporation and the Government of Armenia and the related Procurement Agreement.

The monitoring methodology proposed a study of some stages of the procurement cycle, including the guidelines used for procurement operations, procurement planning, bidding preparation, bidding procedures and evaluation. Conclusions were drawn based on ongoing monitoring of websites of the Millennium Challenge Corporation and MCA-Armenia, study of major documents guiding the operations of MCA-Armenia and scrutiny of 8 packages of bidding documents, including the requests for proposals and bid evaluation reports. The Monitoring revealed some small shortcomings in the process and developed recommendations for MCA-Armenia to improve procurement operations and their transparency.

The Monitoring outcomes have been summarized and publicized in booklets – “Mapping Public Procurement System in Armenia” and “MCA-Armenia Procurement Monitoring Report – 2007.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> “Mapping Public Procurement System in Armenia,” 2007 and “MCA-Armenia Procurement Monitoring Report – 2007,” 2007, available on [www.transparency.am](http://www.transparency.am)

## **Court Monitoring**

The monitoring<sup>10</sup> was conducted by the Armenian Institute for Development with the support of the Foundation. The aim of the monitoring was to identify the obstacles of the criminal procedure legislation, as well as administrative obstacles that hinder the proper implementation of the European Convention provisions. As a result, recommendations were developed to help increase the efficiency and the transparency of the judicial system.

*By Armenian Institute for Development*

The amendments made to the Armenian Constitution on November 27, 2005 marked the start of the second stage of judicial reform. The Amended Constitution paved the way for introducing new legal rules and standards in the national legislation and enforcement practice. These changes are closely connected with the ratification of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms by Armenia. The application of the Convention principles and standards in court practice must become an integral part of the process to reform the domestic legislation.

However, the process is not smooth and free from challenges, especially in the area of criminal justice. The existing system of criminal justice has a number of shortcomings. In addition to deficiencies of the legislation, there remain major problems in terms of the inadequate response of officials responsible for the application of laws to the change currently underway, which is partially due to their inability to adapt psychologically to new professional standards. Besides, some judges, prosecutors, and attorneys have not yet fully embraced the new system of values, which is often accompanied with expressions of incompetence.

All of these factors, coupled with the absence of regular monitoring of the judiciary, contribute to emergence of situations in which corruption, dependence, and personal ties become decisive.

The monitoring of trials is an effective means of influencing the judiciary, which promotes respect for the individual's right to fair trial. The monitoring helps not only to identify shortcomings of the legislation, violations of the legal rules and to develop recommendations based on their analysis, but also to prevent potential arbitrary conduct towards parties to court proceedings.

This study was carried out in the frameworks of the “Monitoring of the Judiciary of the Republic of Armenia: the Right to a Fair Trial” project implemented by the Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation Armenia and the Armenian Development Institute. The project is aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and transparency of the Armenian judiciary, as well as ensuring respect for Article 6 of the European Convention in the examination and solution of criminal cases by means of monitoring court activities and developing recommendations on its basis.

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<sup>10</sup> “Right to Fair Trial in Court System of the Republic of Armenia,” 2009, available on [www.partnership.am](http://www.partnership.am)

The study is based on a number of objective criteria applied to ensure impartiality of the analysis and to reveal shortcomings of the criminal procedure legislation, as well as to identify institutional obstacles to the practical application of specific requirements of the European Convention.

The study was commissioned with the expectation that the judicial reform launched after amending the Constitution and the adoption of a number of new laws would create real preconditions for ensuring respect for human rights and freedoms in the area of criminal justice. Besides, the political, economic, social, and especially legal transformations taking place in the country provide an opportunity for comprehensively studying and assessing the Armenian system of criminal justice.

For any modern state, it is essential not only to promulgate human rights and freedoms, but also to put in place certain safeguards to ensure respect for such rights and freedoms. Some of the most important safeguards are the ones that facilitate the effectiveness of justice in a country. It reflects the legal and social essence of the state, the level of democratization, and the degree to which the individuals are protected in various legal situations. To this end, it is worth mentioning that, under the new Constitution and laws, there is still a lack of safeguards to ensure the effectiveness of justice; in some cases, laws contain provisions that directly hinder the administration of justice and respect for human rights.

Given the insufficient transparency of court activities and, accordingly, the lack of public trust in courts and the justice they administer, it is necessary to continue reforming the legislation, discovering and addressing the visible and invisible obstacles to the effective administration of justice, and preventing unreasonable limitations or violations of human rights and lawful interests.

## **Parliament Monitoring**

In the light of lack of substance-based debate during the 2007 parliamentary elections the Partnership identified the need to find out the position of the leading parties on a wide range of issues, which were compiled with the help of POS experts representing different areas. As a result, the report with the main findings from the interviews was published and presented to the public<sup>11</sup>. Having the election platforms of the parties, after the 2007 Parliamentary elections Partnership decided to take the project a step further and to compare the promises against the actual actions of the political parties represented in the National Assembly. Thus, the project grew into a monitoring initiative<sup>12</sup> of the fall session of the 4<sup>th</sup> convocation of the National Assembly. The project was implemented by a team of journalists in collaboration with experts in each relevant field, who gave their analysis on the laws. The following laws were subject to monitoring in the framework of the project.

- Amendments to the Law on Simplified Tax

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<sup>11</sup> “Political Parties, Views, Approaches “ 2007, available on [www.partnership.am](http://www.partnership.am)

<sup>12</sup> “Monitoring of the Legislative Activity of Political Forces of the National Assembly” 2008, available on [www.partnership.am](http://www.partnership.am)

- Amendments to the Law on Television and Radio Broadcasting
- The Law of the Republic of Armenia on Special Investigation Service
- Law on Criminal Investigation
- Law on Administrative Proceedings
- Amendments to the Civil Procedure Code
- Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code
- Law on State Budget 2008
- Amendments to the Electoral Code
- Draft Law on Yerevan City

*By Modus Vivendi NGO*

Election platforms are brought into focus only during the pre-election period. After the elections, however, the importance of these platforms fades and their existence often becomes secondary. The parties refer to their platforms "when the occasion arises."

The outcome of the parliamentary elections in Armenia held on May 12, 2007 determined the five political forces to enter the National Assembly that will work towards realizing their election programs during upcoming four years (provided no extraordinary elections are held in that period).

Within the framework of the project "Monitoring of the Legislative Activity of Political Forces Represented in the National Assembly" we followed the activities during the fall session of the National Assembly of the 4<sup>th</sup> convocation. The law-making activities of the NA factions were viewed from the perspective of comparing them against the election platforms.

The project was implemented by a team comprised of journalists and experts. The team of journalists followed the work of the NA fall session, compiled the information on the draft laws under monitoring, presented the positions voiced by the factions during the NA discussions and compared them to the approaches reflected in the platforms. The expert team provided its professional analysis on the draft laws.

Information on each of the draft laws under monitoring was presented in the same structure, including three sections. The first section covers the basic information on the draft law, the second sets out the positions based on which the NA factions have either approved or declined a legislative initiative. They were juxtaposed with the approaches envisaged in the platforms. The third section includes analysis by independent experts specializing in the respective fields, elaborating on the legislative initiatives under monitoring.

### **Army Monitoring**

Human rights promotion and protection have always been in the center of attention of the Partnership. Armenia's international commitments make civic oversight of the army an important component of the

country's reform process. In 2007 the Partnership conducted a comprehensive review<sup>13</sup> of the country's international commitments on human rights in the armed forces

*By Elaine Conkievich*

In general, the human rights protection of members of the armed forces is a relatively new topic and not much has been written about it. Only in the last few years has it been taken up in depth, in particular by the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

Armenia is bound, both legally and politically, to commitments in the human rights field which are applicable to the armed forces. Armenia as a member, i.a. of the Council of Europe and the OSCE, is obliged to live up to its international commitments. This review seeks to outline Armenia's international commitments vis-à-vis human rights in the armed forces while also making suggestions or recommendations of in roads to address these commitments and assist Armenia to better fulfill them.

International norms dictate that armed forces personnel are to be considered "citizens in uniform". What this entails is that those individuals serving in the armed forces have the exact same rights as other citizens, with only some limited restrictions due to the nature of their military service.

It is equally accepted that only armed forces whose members human rights' are promoted and protected will go on to further fulfill their duties, while also promoting and protecting the human rights of others, as an actor of the state. Not only does the protection of human rights in the armed forces serve to boost morale and make for a more efficient military but it also improves the image of the force vis-à-vis the population thus making it easier for the military to carry out its tasks.

Reports i.a. by international organizations, NGOs (both local and international), and the U.S. Department of State indicate that the state of human rights in the Armenian armed forces is cause for concern. These reports indicate that abuses occur throughout the army in Armenia and range from bullying, initiation rituals ("dedovshchina")/hazing, corruption, lack of prosecution of abuses, and poor living conditions, [etc. get more detail; army report]. In addition, the issue of conscientious objection continues to be a concern, as Armenia has still not met its Council of Europe commitments in this regard.

Armenia has taken steps to improve the situation of human rights in its armed forces, but there is still much to be done.

## **Democracy Monitoring**

A number of POS member organizations have been monitoring the democratic advancement of the country since the country became a CoE member in 2001. In 2006 the Millennium Challenge Corporation signed a \$236.65 million five-year Compact with the Government of Armenia, largely

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<sup>13</sup> "Review of Armenia's International Commitments vis-à-vis Human Rights in the Armed Forces," 2007, available on [www.partnership.am](http://www.partnership.am)

dependant on meeting a certain criteria in the areas of human rights and rule of law. Therefore, a group of POS members headed by the Yerevan Press Club conducted monitoring of the indicators of “Ruling Justly” category of the MCA selection criteria. The MCA selection criteria were broken down into the following sections: civil liberties, political rights, voice and accountability, government effectiveness, rule of law and control of corruption. The monitoring, led by the Yerevan Press Club, was carried out by the Helsinki Committee of Armenia, Collaboration for Democracy Center, Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression, Community Finance Officers Association and Transparency International Anti-Corruption Center.

*By Yerevan Press Club*

Yerevan Press Club and “TEAM” Research Center, with the support of the Open Society Institute Foundation Armenia, conducted monitoring of the coverage by Armenian media of parliamentary elections in 2007<sup>14</sup> and presidential elections in 2008<sup>15</sup>. The monitoring covered both official election campaigns, i.e. the period covered in legal regulations and during which international observers follow the behavior of leading media, and periods preceding those campaigns when most typical problems with independence and engagement of media become more evident and which are out of the scope of regulation and, therefore, get little attention from international observers.

During the parliamentary elections 18 media (14 broadcast and 4 print) were monitored, and 8 broadcast media were monitored during the presidential elections.

The monitoring objectives were to determine and define the following:

- the effectiveness of the legislative regulation of media during and before the elections;
- the level of attention of media of Armenia to the elections;
- the adequacy of the media in informing the electorate about politicians, presidential candidates;
- the accessibility of TV and radio air for politicians/parties/candidates to express their views and opinions.

To achieve this, qualitative and quantitative monitoring methods were applied. The qualitative monitoring included study of the legislation and other official documents, related to the election process in Armenia, meetings with media heads, journalists, politicians and the public, as well as analysis of their public statements regarding media activities during the pre-election period. The quantitative monitoring included direct measurement of media publications and programs.

Monitors recorded the references, their connotations/nature (positive, negative, neutral), as well as the airtime/newspaper space, allocated to parties/candidates, running in the elections. Both intermediate (on decade basis) and final findings of the studies were presented in press-conferences. Final reports were also published in brochures, containing other materials on media in elections as well.

The monitoring and broad publicizing of findings had quite a strong impact due to the following:

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<sup>14</sup> “Report on Monitoring Armenian Media Coverage of Parliamentary Elections 2007,” 2007, available on [www.partnership.am](http://www.partnership.am)

<sup>15</sup> “Report on Monitoring the Coverage of Presidential Elections 2008 by Broadcast Media of Armenia,” 2008, available on [www.partnership.am](http://www.partnership.am)

8. They identified problems existing in Armenian media and helped search ways of addressing them (both in the course of the election campaigns and after them);
9. The monitoring reports contained assessment of the work of state agencies entitled to ensure proper implementation of media legislation in the course of elections, thus allowing to raise important issues on the administration of elections;
10. Local and international organizations implementing observation of elections received reliable information on the role of media in the electoral process;
11. The recommendations based on the studies helped improve the Armenian electoral legislation;
12. The analyses contained in the reports allowed to develop training programs for practicing journalists, as well as contribute to development and improvement of curricula for journalism schools;
13. The data of monitoring served as material for court proceedings where results of the elections were disputed. The RA Constitutional Court in its judgment and Human Rights Defender in his statement on elections referred to the YPC/"Team" monitoring reports;
14. The monitoring and the findings helped Armenian civil society to make its advocacy agenda in the field of media more concrete.

The monitoring was in the focus of attention of media community, of the public, of political circles and of international observers. The monitoring results were extensively covered by media, quoted in various environments and became an important factor in the public and political life of Armenia, thus, contributing to democratization of the country.

### **Monitoring of Closed and Semi-closed Institutions**

The Public Monitoring Board over Penitentiary, where the Partnership is represented by four organizations – Civil Society Institute, Helsinki Committee, Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Vanadzor Office (HCAV) and Collaboration for Democracy NGO - continued monitoring human rights issues in the penitentiary with a focus on health-related issues. HCAV embarked on human rights monitoring of closed institutions such as psychiatric institutions, orphanages and old people's homes. The HCAV also pioneered in establishing civil control over the army through monitoring of the recruitment process, an activity that the organization started in 2008. A number of Foundation-supported NGOs also focused on monitoring of human rights situation in the regions.

*By Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Vanadzor Office*

In 2007-2008, 16 volunteers from the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Vanadzor Office conducted human rights monitoring in the institutions mentioned below.

The long-term goal of the monitoring was to ***develop mechanisms for human rights monitoring in closed and semi-closed institutions and promote their introduction in the Republic of Armenia.***

Every monitoring conducted in closed and semi-closed institutions had its strategic goals and objectives, in particular:

*Year 2007*

***1. The Vanadzor Orphanage***

The purpose of monitoring in the Vanadzor orphanage was to ensure the exercise of children's right stipulated in the UN Convention and the RA Law on Children's Rights.

The monitoring revealed problems in the following areas:

- Conditions/facilities to ensure that children have healthy lifestyle,
- Exercise of the right to be free from cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment,
- Exercise of children's right to education,
- Exercise of children's right to the respect of personal life and privacy.

***The Results***

Two working discussions with the participation of staff members from the Vanadzor orphanage, Lori marzpetaran's (Governor's office) children's rights protection department and the RA ministry of labor and social affairs took place to develop recommendations on how to address the problems identified in the Vanadzor orphanage. A package of recommendations, consisting of five points, was developed as a result of these working discussions. The package will be presented to the RA government in the near future.

In addition, a management board consisting of children was established in the Vanadzor orphanage. Also, courses for preparing the children for future independent life are being offered in the Vanadzor orphanage.

***2. The Vanadzor Old People's Home***

The purpose of monitoring in the Vanadzor old people's home was to ensure that the rights of old people are protected in the old people's home.

The monitoring revealed problems in the following areas:

- Exercise of the old people's right to receive medical treatment,
- Treatment of the Vanadzor old people's home's residents by staff members,
- Property and privacy protection,
- Living conditions of the Vanadzor old people's home's residents.

***The Results***

Recommendations on how to address the problems identified in the Vanadzor old people's home have been developed, and they will be presented to the RA government in the near future.

In addition, the Vanadzor old people's home hired a social worker, and regular meetings are organized at the home where residents get an opportunity to raise questions and get answers.

***3. The Lori Marz Psycho-Neurological Dispensary***

The purpose of monitoring in the Lori Marz Psycho-Neurological Dispensary was to ensure that the conditions for keeping people with mental disorders comply with international standards.

The monitoring revealed problems in the following areas:

- Conditions of keeping people with mental disorders in the psycho-neurological dispensary ,
- Exercise of the right to be free from torture, inhuman or degrading treatment,
- Exercise of the right to receive medical treatment.

### ***The Results***

Two working discussions with the participation of staff members of the Lori Marz Psycho-Neurological Dispensary and Lori marzpetaran's healthcare department took place to develop recommendations on how to address the problems identified in the Lori Marz Psycho-Neurological Dispensary. Prior to these two discussions, there was another discussion to clarify the problems identified during the monitoring; this meeting was attended by the deputy marzpet (deputy governor), head of the Lori marzpetaran's healthcare department and head doctor, director of the Lori Marz Psycho-Neurological Dispensary, leader of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Vanadzor office, coordinator from the legal counseling department and coordinator of monitoring in the Lori Marz Psycho-Neurological Dispensary. A package of recommendations, consisting of six points, was developed as a result of these working discussions. The package will be presented to the RA government in the near future.

The RA minister of healthcare issued six decrees related to our recommendation.

Based on the monitoring results, ***a report on "Human Rights in the Lori Marz: Results of Monitoring in the Lori Marz Psycho-Neurological Dispensary, the Vanadzor Old People's Home and the Vanadzor Orphanage" was published, available in both Armenian and English on the [www.hcav.am](http://www.hcav.am) website.***

### ***Year 2008***

#### ***4. The Vanadzor Criminal-Executive Facility (Penitentiary)***

The purpose of monitoring in the Vanadzor criminal-executive facility was to contribute to the implementation of the European prison rules in the facility.

The monitoring revealed problems in the following areas:

- Exercise of the prisoners' right to communication with the outside world,
- Humanitarian treatment of prisoners,
- Living conditions of prisoners in the Vanadzor criminal-executive facility.

A working discussion with staff members from the Vanadzor criminal-executive facility is planned in order to clarify the problems identified during monitoring and develop a package of recommendations on how to address these problems. This package will be presented to the RA government.

#### ***5. The Vanadzor Childcare and Protection Boarding School No. 1***

The purpose of monitoring in the Vanadzor Childcare and Protection Boarding School No. 1 was to contribute to full enforcement of international standards in the boarding school.

The monitoring revealed problems in the following areas:

- Humanitarian treatment of children by the childcare center staff,
- Living conditions of children in the childcare center.

A working discussion with staff members of the Vanadzor Childcare and Protection Boarding School No. 1 is planned in order to clarify the problems identified during monitoring and develop a package of recommendations on how to address these problems. This package will be presented to the RA government.

A report based on the monitoring results is currently being prepared for publication.

### **Comparative Analysis of the RA Law on Operative Investigative Activities with the Council of Europe Principles and Standards**

The Partnership commissioned a legal organization to analyze the law against the CE principles and standards. The final report was widely shared<sup>16</sup>, and, based on the results of the comparative analysis, a discussion was organized by the Partnership with participation of all key stakeholders.

*By Bagin Legal Office*

RA Law on Operative Investigation was adopted on 22 October 2007. The author of the Law is the Government. The Law regulates legal relations occurring in the field of operative investigation. It stipulates a comprehensive list of 16 types of operative investigation actions, requiring that operative investigation actions are regulated only by law. Adoption of the law should be regarded as a significant step forward as previously operative investigation actions were implemented without any legal regulation.

It is clear that Council of Europe requirements and international standards were considered and taken as base for drafting the Law: the principle of “proportionality” and “necessity” of interference, judicial oversight of operative investigation actions which significantly interfere with private life such as, internal surveillance, surveillance over the correspondence, postal, telegraph and other sources of communication, tapping the phone, ensuring accessibility of financial information and secret surveillance of financial transactions, bribing or accepting bribes, external surveillance using the technical devices.

Nevertheless, a number of significant international requirements and standards were disregarded while drafting the Law, which may lead to serious human rights violations especially given that the Law does not include effective measures for legal protection of rights.

The Law regulates operative investigation actions both for national security purposes and for the cases of investigation of other crimes and does not at all differentiate between the two cases. Nevertheless,

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<sup>16</sup> “Comparative Analysis of the RA Law on Operative Investigation with the Council of Europe Principles and Standards,” 2007, available on [www.partnership.am](http://www.partnership.am)

contemporary democratic standards require legal and institutional differentiation between those two areas. Hence the Law needs to be conceptually modified in order to meet the standard.

In particular, there should be a clear distinction between operative investigation carried out in relation to national security issues and operative investigation of other crimes. Moreover, those two fields should be regulated by two different laws.

Simultaneously the Law should prohibit use of equipment and resources of National security bodies for the investigation carried out by other government officials (police, other government agencies).

The Law does not stipulate standards for carrying out operative investigation. It is permitted to conduct unrestricted operative investigation to reveal any crime, which contradicts CoE standards. For each operative investigation action stipulated by the Law a specific standard should be provided to make operative investigation acceptable.

The laws of majority of CoE member states require judges, prosecutors or implementers of operative investigation to provide substantiation for the measure, which should also meet some minimum standards. The majority of CoE member states have minimum substantive standards for approval of operative investigation, which are missing from the RA Law. Absence of these provisions raises issues of proportionality and legality under Article 8 of ECHR.

The Law defines target groups for only a few actions of operative investigation. For all operative investigation measures the law should specify the target groups subject to operative investigation.

A number of CoE member states prohibit surveillance of specific groups and individuals. The RA Law provides for such a restriction for a very small group of individuals. It is necessary to expand both the target group of people not subject to operative investigation as well as the list of operative investigation actions which will be prohibited for a certain target group.

The Law does not provide adequate control mechanisms for operative investigation, which does not meet CoE requirements. As a minimum requirement it is necessary to stipulate a distinct date of implementation of operative investigation as well as a requirement, according to which the entity performing the investigation should periodically report to the entity permitting the operative investigation.

The Law stipulates that timeframe for operative investigation is set at two months. No differentiation is made based on the specific action, which does not meet CoE requirements. Moreover, a maximum deadline of 12 months for the implementation of operative investigation is stipulated only for several types of operative investigation actions. It is necessary to differentiate the timeframes of implementation of activities depending on the level of the interference into the person's private life, as well as to stipulate a maximum timeframe for all operative investigation actions.

The CoE standards stipulate that the activity of undercover agents should not be provocative of a crime. Use of evidence obtained by agents provocateurs result in violation of Article 6 of ECHR. The RA Law does not reflect on this requirement at all. The Law should stipulate that it is prohibited to incite the

suspect to a crime by state officials when implementing operative investigation and using undercover agents.

The law somewhat regulates the procedure for storing and elimination of the information acquired as a result of operative investigation, which nevertheless does not prohibit compilation of “dossiers” on individuals. A special procedure for destroying the evidence should be stipulated both when criminal proceedings are initiated based on the evidence from operative investigation as well as when the suspect is found not guilty.

The Law does not define which persons should have an opportunity to be informed in the future on being subject to secret surveillance, which contradicts the CoE requirements and does not allow for the right for an effective legal assistance. The Law should provide that a person subject to secret surveillance as well as persons affected by operative investigation should be subsequently informed. In the case when provision of such information may pose a threat to the lives or health of the persons or the on-going investigation or there is a threat of making state or official secret public or there is a threat of disclosure of information regarding secret employees of the entities performing operative investigation as well as on the persons who secretly cooperate or cooperated with those implementing operative investigation, then the agency performing operative investigation should ask the court to decide on disclosure or non-disclosure and the scope of information to be disclosed.

The Law provides that results of specific actions of operative investigation may be regarded as evidence and this clause contradicts RA Criminal Procedure Code. The Law should clearly stipulate which results of operative investigation may be regarded as evidence and should be in conformity with Criminal Procedure Code.

## **CIVIL SOCIETY CAPACITY BUILDING**

The failure of the civil society to adequately respond to the situation at hand could be attributed to lack of hardcore and directed effort to support human rights NGOs. Since the Partnership for Open Society is a coalition of NGOs united around priorities, constituting the main areas of interest to Partnership organizations, leading organizations in each area were identified for strengthening their capacity, and uniting and leading other organizations with the same mandate.

### **The Armenian Association of Women with University Education (AAWUE)**

The main goal of the project in 2007 and 2008 was to enhance women's political participation in pre-election and election period, especially in view of the parliamentary and presidential elections. This was achieved through organizing educational activities to increase the female population's awareness on their rights, democratic institutions, etc. AAWUE collaborated with other NGOs pursuing similar objectives. During the project implementation regional centers were established to serve the needs of the civil society and provide informational support through various publications.

### **The Yerevan Press Club (YPC)**

The Yerevan Press Club established the first **experimental** media self-regulation body, Media Ethics Observatory (MOE), as well as the first common Code of Conduct for media that joined it. Although at the start of the project only 18 media representatives had signed the Code of Conduct, by the end of 2008 the number of media organizations who joined the self-regulation initiative reached thirty three. Throughout 2007 and 2008 cases were brought to the attention of MEO on violations of the Code of Conduct and the Declaration of Elections and Referenda Reporting. As a result of the initiative **two yearbooks** have been published, containing the main documents on self-regulation initiative – the Code of Conduct and the Declaration on covering elections and referenda; a survey of 23 parties, running for seats at the RA National Assembly in 2007; description of the complaints, received by MEO, with quotations from the stories in question; the judgments made by the MEO, as well as materials on international practice in the field of media self-regulation. In November 2008 a procedure was developed on how to deal with complaints addressed to a media company/organization that is not part of the initiative.

### **The Helsinki Committee of Armenia (HCA)**

The aim of the project is to improve the state of human rights in Armenia through advocacy of international human rights best practices, to monitor Armenia's compliance with international commitments and to increase awareness of the domestic and international community on the state of human rights in Armenia. The project included continuous monitoring, reporting and dissemination of information on the reforms in the area of human rights, adherence to the Council of Europe commitments and the requirements of the ENP Action Plan. Within the framework of this grant<sup>17</sup> the HCA provides free legal consultancy to vulnerable groups, raises awareness on human rights issues through publication of "Observer" bulletin and conducts monitoring of the situation with freedom of assembly, religious minorities, alternative service and torture and abusive treatment of individuals in

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<sup>17</sup> HRGGP of OSI-Budapest provides institutional capacity building support to the NGO.

closed institutions. The NGO also aims at strengthening the capacity of regional human rights activists through trainings on international human rights standards. As a result, HCA has mobilized regional youth to conduct a monitoring of human rights situation in schools in 2008 and plans to continue this activity for special schools during 2009.

Efforts were also made by Partnership NGOs to enhance the capacity of new human rights activists and groups, especially in the regions. As an example, Helsinki Committee of Armenia mobilized and trained regional youth to monitor human rights issues in schools.

Six other non-governmental organizations, also Partnership members, developed their advocacy skills during this reporting period and carried out numerous advocacy initiatives and public awareness programs. This was made possible with the support of the Netherlands government and the Foundation. (for more information please see the OSI Assistance Foundation – Armenia 2008 report).

## STATEMENTS

### STATEMENT

#### *on Hall Refusals*

December 3, 2008

We, the undersigned, are deeply concerned with the fact that even the minimal requirements to restore some democratic practices, outlined in the PACE resolutions 1609 and 1620 and acknowledged by the Armenian government as urgent, have not been implemented, and that instead new restrictions are being enforced by authorities. We are especially concerned about the fundamental right of freedom of assembly enshrined in the Declaration of Human Rights and in the Armenian Constitution.

During the months following the State of Emergency, Armenian civil society has repeatedly been denied the right to conduct meetings, discussions, film screenings, and round-tables on numerous important issues ranging from the human rights situation in the country to religious freedoms. It has become common practice for hotels, cinemas, and business centers to refuse rental of space to civil society organizations critical of the Armenian government and the current state of affairs. The Armenia Marriott Hotel, Congress Hotel, Ani Plaza and other hotels, as well as the Moscow theater have repeatedly refused the rental of halls for civil society events, labeling them as “political.”

Some hotels were very straightforward and said that they were instructed not to rent halls for any event that may be considered political and that they had to make calls to “respective people” to verify the “political” nature of the event. Some said orally that they were not allowed to rent halls for such purposes, but in their written responses provided other various excuses, such as technical problems or the non-availability of the halls.

This government pressure on businesses not to rent out halls is exercised completely outside any legal context; there is no law regulating hall renting practices by private companies. These undemocratic practices pose a new and serious blow to democracy.

Below are only some of the examples of the legitimate organizations and activities that were refused rental agreements:

- In September Congress Hotel refused hosting the Fund against Violation of Law event on the issue of Sayat-Nova school teachers’ dismissal (labor rights protection case). The verbally given explanation was that it was of political nature.
- Congress Hotel, first confirmed and then refused hosting the October 09 the Partnership event to discuss the main concerns with the processes in the country (recently adopted amendments to the broadcast law, violations of freedom of media/access to media, freedom of assembly and association, widespread corruption and the abuse of power, the CoE Human Rights Commissioner’s report and the country’s implementation of PACE resolutions 1609 and 1620). The verbally given explanation was that they cannot host “political” events and that OSI would get refusal from all other hotels. In parallel, the Foundation sent the same request to Armenia

Marriott Hotel. The latter had to find out from “decision-makers” whether they could allow hosting it.

- Moscow theatre first agreed but then refused hosting viewing of the film “Alienation,” produced by Tigran Paskevichyan and ordered by “The Victims of State Needs” NGO, even though per the initial agreement the funds had already been transferred. The official verbal response was that they cannot allow viewing of films of ‘political nature.’ The reason for considering it ‘political’ was that Levon Ter-Petrosyan was seen in one of the episodes of the film. Later, both Marriott and Congress hotels rejected hosting the viewing of the film. The event was originally planned to be held on October 10, but due to the change of the venue, it was rescheduled to be held on October 27 at the Tekeyan Cultural Center.
- The Helsinki Committee of Armenia had to struggle to rent hotel space for its presentation on “Violence in schools.”
- Ani and Congress hotels refused hosting a seminar on Religious Tolerance organized Collaboration for Democracy NGO. Erebuni Hotel first confirmed and then refused hosting the event. The official explanation was that there were no available halls, which was not true as we found out.

We find this situation deeply disturbing and unacceptable for a country engaged in the European Neighbourhood Policy and that claims to be committed to democratic values and principles. We call on the Armenian government to stop this abuse of power which goes against all norms of democracy and free economic system. We also call upon all businesses to not yield to government pressure that denies Armenia’s citizens of their fundamental rights to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression.

These abuses of the rights provided in the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, which are rights the Armenian people gave themselves, must be stopped now.

## Signatories

Arena of Education NGO  
“Asparez” Journalists’ Club  
Civil Society Institute  
Collaboration for Democracy  
Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression  
Helsinki Committee of Armenia  
Helsinki Citizens Assembly Vanadzor Branch  
“Internews-Armenia” Media Support NGO  
Media Diversity Institute  
Menq Plus NGO  
Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation-Armenia  
Transparency International Anti-corruption Center  
Yerevan Press Club

## Statement

### *on Abstaining from Nomination or Supporting of Candidates during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Stakeholder Committee Elections of MCA-Armenia*

September 12, 2008

We, the representatives of the undersigned organizations, have actively participated in all stages of the MCA-Armenia Project including development of proposals for the Compact in the preparatory stage, development of the procedure for the formation of the Stakeholder Committee (SC), organization and conduct of elections to the SC, monitoring of the Compact implementation and raising public awareness of the Project to ensure transparency of the processes at all levels. Alongside with this, we closely followed the role of civil society organizations in the Millennium Challenge Account - Armenia during the last 2 years and decided against nominating candidates for the 3<sup>rd</sup> SC elections and against collectively supporting any candidate for the following reasons:

MCA-Armenia's public monitoring entity, i.e. the Stakeholder Committee, which is called to protect interests of some 750.000 direct beneficiaries of the Program has systemic drawbacks in its charter considerably reducing the effectiveness of the SC's mission. Namely, the Stakeholder Committee consisting of 15 civil society representatives delegates five of its members to the main governing body, the Governing Council (GC). In the meantime, these delegates retain their membership in the SC, which leads to obvious conflict of interests.

Indeed, during the last 2 years some members of the GS delegated from the SC participated in the tenders, anticipating contracts from the program funds. During all the tenders they kept their active membership both in the SC and GC. Moreover, they did not even inform the Stakeholder Committee about their participation in the tenders. When criticized for the conflict of interests, the bidders indicated that they would drop their membership from the SC and GC but only after winning the tender.

In the July 23, 2008 session [1] the Governing Council unanimously decided to cut water rehabilitation component due to Dollar depreciation and increasing construction costs. Reduction of water rehabilitation activities makes up to 50-70% of the initial plans depending on the methodology of calculations. All the 4 GS members delegated from the SC voted for the cut alongside with the government officials of the GC.[2] In making this decision, neither the 4 SC "delegates", nor the rest of the GS asked for the SC opinion. This reduction directly and seriously affects interests of hundreds of thousands farmers and rural residents. Meanwhile, on one hand, the working group could have properly assessed the possible risks in due time and on the other hand, the government should have allocated alternative funds so that the project was not cut, thus disappointing the rural residents, particularly, that it had referred to the availability of alternative sources of funding for the MCA on a number of occasions.

During the last 2 SC elections, a number of members were nominated and elected as civil society representatives while they simultaneously were holding posts in different governmental structures. As a result, their standing was mostly consistent with the position of government officials when addressing objectives of the MCA-Armenia.[3] This distorted the idea of the stakeholders' participation and made the protection of real beneficiary interests rather than the personal ones virtually impossible.

Documents, such as the letters of former RA President R. Kocharyan and of President S. Sargsyan addressed to J. Danilovich, Chief Executive Officer of the MCC, which are related to the progress of the Program and allegedly refer to possible suspension and termination risks of the Compact and which are not classified according to the current legislation of Armenia, have been constantly and consistently kept in secret from the SC.

Efforts of the three SC members (Levon Barseghyan, Artur Sakunts and Seyran Martirosyan) nominated and supported by the Partnership for Open Society were mainly futile in addressing the aforementioned and other problems. Initiatives undertaken by them to address the problems fell short due to the efforts of the majority of the SC.

The Millennium Challenge Corporation and the Armenian representatives of the Corporation were fully aware of the above problems but did not take major actions to address them and did not have substantial influence on improving effectiveness of the SC activities.

Thus, we feel that in its current format, the SC actually has been and remains a hollow entity fulfilling the Compact's requirement of the civil society participation rather than a body that really ensures representation and protection of the beneficiary interests.

In the meantime, in the future we are going to continue close monitoring of the activities of the MCA-Armenia, SC and GC and regularly inform the public about our observations on the progress of the project.

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Yerevan Press Club  
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Helsinki Citizens Assembly Vanadzor Branch  
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Transparency International Anti-Corruption Center  
Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation-Armenia  
“Menk Plus” NGO  
“Arena of Education” NGO  
“Azatan” Community Union of Azatan  
“Selen” Journalists Club, NGO  
“Spiritual Armenia” NGO  
“Collaboration for Democracy” NGO  
Armenian Center of Political and International Research  
“Khnamk” NGO  
Lore Eco Club  
“Femida” NGO  
“Trust” Sociological Research Center

“Association of Women with University Education” NGO  
“Fund against the Violation of Law” NGO  
Team Research Center, NGO  
“Internews-Armenia” Media Support NGO  
Mental Health Foundation  
Social Policy and Development Center  
Union of Women Named after Saint Sandukht  
“Union of Doctors and Engineers” NGO  
Rights Information Center  
“Bridge of Hope” NGO  
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Cultural Experimental Center  
“Biosophia” NGO  
“Yerashkhiq” (Insurance)CSC NGO  
“KhoranArd” Intellectual Center, NGO  
“Geophone” NGO  
“Shirak Center”, NGO  
Gyumri Orhus Center  
“From the View of the Time”, NGO  
Vanadzor Press Club, NGO  
Democratic Initiatives Youth Center -Vanadzor

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[1] Official protocol: <http://www.mca.am/new/armversion/pdf/GC%20minutes-32-arm.pdf>

[2] Karen Nazaryan (Executive Director of Armenian Inter-Church Round Table NGO), Karine Baghdasaryan (authorized person), Araik Hovhannisyan (President of "Association of Municipal Councilors of Armenia"), Vanik Sogomonyan (President of the "National Union of Farmers"), Ashot Voskanyan (President of "Agridevelopment", Director of “Agriculture Support Republican Center” CJSC).

[3] During 2007 elections there was a case when a civil servant, chief specialist of the RA Ministry of Sport and Youth Issues did not indicate his position of a government official, was elected as SC member and participated in the secret voting for the election of 5 delegates to the Governing Council.

## Statement

### *On Presidential Elections, Pre-Election Period and Post-Election Processes*

We, the undersigned civil society organizations, express our deep concern with the presidential elections on February 19, 2008, the pre-election period, the election campaign and the post-election processes in the country. The assessment of international observers, even though portrayed in a positive light by the government and the government controlled media, was critical. However, the apparent discrepancy between the actual findings of the assessment with the formative first two sentences of the report resulted in the government only referring to this paragraph in the international observers' assessment in order to legitimize the results of the election. Meanwhile, in the report, international observers pointed out to media censorship, intimidation of voters, vote buying, etc. and *called vote count 'bad' or 'very bad' in 16 percent of polling stations visited*. Qualifying such practices as a “step forward” and in line with the commitments to hold free and fair elections discredits the notion of democracy and further lowers the standards of democratic reforms.

A number of undersigned organizations observed the elections during the voting day as well as the process prior and post February 19. The instances of violations are numerous and are documented in our reports.

We are particularly concerned with the Freedom of Media/Access to Media, Violence, Corruption and Use of Administrative Resources, Arrests of Public Figures.

One of the main points that the OSCE/ODHIR observation mission made in its interim report concerned the need to establish public trust in the electoral process. Deep rooted mistrust and often-referred-to public apathy is nothing else but self-preservation reaction of the Armenian people vs. the atmosphere of impunity for those who perpetrated electoral fraud in all past elections. The processes taking place after the elections are alarming and will definitely deepen the public distrust.

We believe that as long as electoral fraud goes uninvestigated and unpunished, there will be no trust in the process and in the legal and judicial system.

We believe that only through open and widely inclusive public discussion over the above stated problems and violations it is possible to foster the atmosphere of trust and public confidence.

In view of the above, we state that this election was not held in correspondence with our understanding of democratic values and practices.

We believe that the way the authorities handle the fraud will be indicative of the honest determination to abide by the rules of democratic free and fair elections.

We call upon the Armenian government to stop politically motivated detentions. These are not calls for impunity, but a call for the government to set the example for the Armenian people and to act within the law.

We call upon the international community to see through the commitment of the Armenian government to comply with the procedure and to require documentation of proper investigation and due punishment of those who violated the law.

We call upon the international community to make objective conclusions based on their own findings and not to discredit the notion of democracy, democratic standards and principles, as well as the international organizations carrying out an observation mission.

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Helsinki Citizens Assembly Vanadzor Branch  
“Internews-Armenia” Media Support NGO  
Media Diversity Institute  
Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation-Armenia  
Transparency International Anti-corruption Center  
Yerevan Press Club  
Foundation against Violation of Law

## Statement

### *On Parliamentary Elections, the Pre-Election Period and Election Campaign*

May 14, 2007

We, the undersigned civil society organizations, express our deep concern with the pre-election period and the election campaign. The importance of these elections and the need to hold free and fair elections was appreciated by the society desperate for a change. The government, in turn, fully realized that the country's international standing and perspectives of being part of the European Neighborhood Policy and the Millennium Challenge Account will be jeopardized by another election falling short of international standards. However, that did not stop the authorities from increasing the exiting control over institutions and resources and their unlawful use during the pre-election year.

We express our deep concern with violations of freedom of media and access to the mass media, freedom of assembly and association, the right to privacy, the violence used and the murders or murder attempts during and before the election period, as well as widespread corruption and the unlawful use of administrative resources. Methods and practices were used in the electoral fight to create an atmosphere of fear, suspicion and personal insecurity. We base our concern on our observations and the findings of monitoring work that we carried out throughout the year.

- Freedom of media/access to media – Despite the fact that the opposition had access to the mass media during the election campaign, and the few days preceding it, it is well known that they were virtually deprived of airtime before that. While Public Television and other media channels, controlled by the government, provided a somewhat balanced coverage of the election campaign, the damage had been already created by the biased approach of the media before the election campaign started. Other important issues of concern to us in this field as civil society representatives are:

a. While the Constitutional amendments in 2005 provided with an opportunity for a more representative and, hence, independent regulatory body, the legislative “improvement” passed in February 2007 ensured that this body remains under the Presidential control until 2011 (note that by that time TV licenses will have expired, and new licenses will have been distributed).

b. The Chairman of the National TV and Radio Commission, with whom the closure of the only opposition channel and persistent refusing of a license to A1+ in 12 tender competitions are associated, was reappointed to the post, a sign of approval and a go-ahead for his policies as the Chairman of the entity.

c. The year was marked with violations against journalists. To name just a few, intimidation used against Narine Avetisian (Executive Director of the Lori television station); intimidation followed by criminal proceedings against Gagik Shamshian (a freelance journalist); attack against Hovhannes

Galajian (Editor-in-Chief of Iravunk), and Arman Babajanian's (editor of Zhamanak Yerevan) unjustifiably strict sentence, etc.

- Freedom of Assembly - The campaign was marred by numerous instances of bans on demonstrations and public meetings of opposition parties and civil society organizations, e.g. the Heritage party, the Rule of Law party, Impeachment, in Yerevan and especially in the regions.
- Freedom of Association – Imposed vs. voluntary party membership, a practice that was widely used in the pre-election period, especially in state-controlled institutions and small size communities in the regions is a blatant violation of the right to freedom of assembly.
- Violence - Murders or murder attempts of officials, as well as murders of local criminal “authorities,” with connections to major political parties participating in elections, took place throughout Armenia. The police beating up of the demonstrators at the May 9th opposition rally in an attempt to instigate fear and chaos among demonstrators, an attempt that failed. With different excuses apartments of public figures were searched and opposition leaders were held in detention.
- Right to privacy - A method, from the inherited KGB toolset box, such as clandestine recording of private conversation was used, which is an act that was not condemned by the authorities, and a criminal case was not instituted. Moreover, a reference to it was made by the President, who formed a judgment on the recording and allowed speculations on the character of the opposition leader at a meeting with university students.
- Corruption - The practice of voter bribing before and during the election campaign as well as on the voting day has become institutionalized in Armenia, and this election was not an exception. The bribery took form of “charity,” e.g. distribution of agricultural products, pesticides, as well as TV sets, etc through so-called “charity organizations” belonging to certain political parties, and direct vote bribing practices. Bribes were offered and/or given to voters and Commission members alike.
- Use of administrative resources - Control over state institutions and administrative resources created unfair conditions for political parties. Institutions responsible for insuring free and fair elections failed to perform their duties. State officials actively campaigned during their working hours before and during the official campaign period. Government employees, as well as employees of state institutions were pressured to make certain political choices by authorities, thus creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation. Pressure was also put on them to secure a certain number of votes for certain parties. Law-enforcement bodies were used as a tool to create that atmosphere with their corresponding actions. Ordinary people attending gatherings by opposition parties were threatened by local authorities, and had to go to gatherings of pro-government parties instead. Despite the claimed improvement of the voters’ list, numerous instances of multiple voting, using votes of the people absent from the country took place.

In view of the above, we state that this election was not held in correspondence with our understanding of democratic values and practices. This causes us serious concern about the path the Republic of Armenia is following.

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Center of Right and Information  
Collaboration for Democracy  
Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression  
Democracy: Political and Juridical Research Center  
Helsinki Committee of Armenia  
Helsinki Citizens Assembly Vanadzor Branch  
"Internews-Armenia" Media Support NGO  
Media Diversity Institute  
Mental Health Foundation  
Open Forum for Civic Initiatives  
Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation-Armenia  
Social Policy and Development Center  
Spiritual Armenia  
Team Research Center  
Transparency International/Center for Regional Development  
Yerevan Press Club

## Statement

### *on Armenia joining a number of CIS countries in requesting changes in OSCE election observation procedures*

A number of civil society organizations united in the Partnership for Open Society Initiative hereby express our opinion on the matter of Armenia's recent joining a number of CIS countries in requesting changes in OSCE election observation procedures.

We consider this as yet another retreat from democracy and further isolation of the country from European integration. We believe this is a harmful development from all possible points of view, political, geopolitical, strategic and societal. It remains to be seen how much damage yet another destructive attempt can cause OSCE, one of the most credible international institutions. However, undoubtedly much higher is the damage that it has and will cause for Armenia. The Armenian government's action further alienates our country from developed democracies when it lobbies for closed election processes that are not accountable to the people in a country that has yet to conduct even one democratic free and fair election. It shows how little Armenian authorities care for adhering to international standards. Most importantly, it contributes to the further undermining of already low levels of trust of the Armenian public in the Armenian government's willingness to conduct truly democratic elections.

We can see no reason why a democratic and open government, which claims a desire to bring the country closer to democratic standards and the European community, would support the demand of not only limiting the number of election observers but also undermining the independence of the process. Since May 13, 2007, the Armenia government has repeatedly referred to the positive assessment of the Parliamentary elections. It claimed international acknowledgement of substantial democratic advancement. It used the assessment in justifying its eligibility for MCA and its readiness to embrace ENP. One might believe that having successfully "passed the exam" the Armenian government would welcome the opportunity to maintain at least the same degree of openness. What has happened in the course of the past few months that turned the government away from the very election assessment process it so heavily used to its advantage?

Guesses to the answer are numerous and, alas, none are becoming for the Armenian government. The upcoming presidential elections make those guesses even less flattering. Unfortunately, the Armenian government does not see the need to explain the steps it takes in international arenas. Nor does it provide any explanation for steps that are opaque and controversial. In the absence of open public policy processes in Armenia, processes that will remain in the dark until public officials are elected in competitive, free, and fair election processes, the Armenian people are left to play the old Soviet guessing game when trying to decipher the Armenian government's motivations.

However unclear the motivations, the damage to democracy and Armenia's openness is quite clear. We, civil society representatives, protest against the Armenian government's blind following of initiatives damaging to its people.

P.S. When the text of this statement was already written, Minister Oskanyan provided the rationale behind the Armenian government's joining this initiative. As per Mr. Oskanyan it is the urge to save

funds by limiting the number of long-term observers. It remains unclear though, how the other, no less important provision of this initiative, namely making the OSCE/ODHIR observers' report subject to prior governmental approval, will help saving money. One may only guess...

## Open Letter

19 November, 2007

Mr. Robert Kocharyan, RA President  
Mr. Serzh Sargsyan, RA Prime Minister  
Mr. Tigran Torosyan, Chairman of RA National Assembly  
Mr. Aram Harutyunyan, RA Minister of Environmental Protection  
Mr. Nerses Yeritsyan, RA Minister of Trade and Economic Development  
Mr. Valeri Mezhlumyan, President of the Armenian Copper Program (ACP) CJSC  
Mr. Valeri Ovsyannikov, Director of VTB (Armenia) CJSC  
Stakeholders Committee, Millennium Challenge Account - Armenia

The Environmental Public Alliance of 34 non-governmental organizations and “Partnership for Open Society” Initiative of 63 organizations express their concern about the current processes regarding the exploitation of the country’s natural resources and in particular, over the construction of Teghut ore mining and processing enterprise and the operation of Teghut copper-molybdenum mine.

The concept “sustainable development” implies rational utilization and protection of natural resources for the welfare of the future generation. Whereas today the lack of strategy for sustainable development of the country and for economical utilization of underground resources cause careless and shortsighted utilization of the Armenian mines. In its turn it may have irreversible negative impact on the environment as well as on human health and the prospects of the country’s economic development.

Presently there are opinions and comments expressed by the Armenian public and professionals on the operation of the Teghut mine, which differ from those of the company that initiated the operation of the mine. Considering the job opening opportunities for the local residents as well as the irreversible losses to the environment, we find that it is unacceptable to adopt a hasty decision on exploitation of the mine in a situation of public disagreement, without considering the concerns of numerous professionals and organizations. In our opinion, those should have deserved more attention provided the scarce number of forests in the country, intensive desertification processes, violation of environmental legislation of the Republic of Armenia as well as obligations of UN international conventions adopted by the country.

In this regard we call for the Government of the Republic of Armenia:

- to take immediate measures to cease the work already started in the area of Teghut copper molybdenum mine;
- to arrange for an independent assessment of the environmental impact of mining with participation of the best and prominent international organizations for an unbiased conclusion on the effects of Teghut operation.

We expect your understanding of the problem and your assistance in coming up with a solution and would be glad to discuss the above mentioned concerns within any suggested format.

## EVENTS IN 2007 AND 2008

1. **February 21, 2007.** Discussion on Civil Society Assessment of the Situation in Armenia.
2. **March 2, 2007.** Discussion on Sending the Criminal Case Back for Additional Investigation.
3. **March 16, 2007.** Discussion on the Law on “Relations of Armenian Apostolic Church and Republic of Armenia.”
4. **April 18, 2007.** Education as a Basis for Political Participation and Responsibility.
5. **May 3, 2007.** Political parties viewpoints and approaches.
6. **May 14, 2007.** Statement on Elections
7. **June 20, 2007.** Presentation of Report on Monitoring of Democratic Reforms in Armenia – 2006.
8. **June 11, 2007.** Discussion on Road and Transport Issues in Yerevan and Possible Solutions.
9. **June 29, 2007.** Press conference on the Amendments to the RA Law on Television and Radio and Law on State Tax.
10. **July 25, 2007.** Discussion on the Current Status of European Neighborhood Policy Program in Armenia.
11. **September 12, 2007.** POS members’ meeting
12. **November 8, 2007.** Presentation of Civil Society’s Assessment of Government Decision on ENP Action Plan Implementation Tools for 2007.
13. **November 9, 2007.** Presentation of Situation with Domestic Violence in Armenia
14. **November 19, 2007.** Public hearing on Teghut
15. **December 18, 2007.** CEDAW implementation report in the Republic of Armenia in 2002-2007 – Alternative Report Presentation
16. **December 21, 2007-** Law on Operative Investigation
17. **February 29, 2008** – Press Conference to present the Statement on Pre-election campaign
18. **June 27, 2008-** PACE Resolution 1609 on Functioning of Democratic Institutions in Armenia -Civil Society Perspective
19. **October 9, 2008-** The Country’s Implementation of PACE Resolutions 1609 and 1620 and Main Concerns with the Developments in Armenia (recently adopted amendments to the broadcast law, violations of freedom of media/access to media, freedom of assembly and association, as well as widespread corruption and the abuse of power and authority).

20. **October 30, 2008** - Presentation of Report on Violence in Schools
21. **November 14, 2008** - Public Movement in the Prospect of the Third Millennium: New Challenges, Priorities and Strategy
22. **December 12, 2008** - The Monitoring Report of the Legislative Activity of Political Forces of the National Assembly
23. **December 18, 2008**- Civil Society Assessment of ENP 2008 Implementation

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