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DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA
ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE

Statement
on the Elections-Related Debate under the Review of Current Issues
delivered by Ambassador Jivan Tabibian
at the 554th Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
May 5, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The issues raised by the previous speakers are in so many ways central, important and systemic to our organization. It would be pity if it were perceived as a simple and restricted dialogue between the Mission of Belarus and the Mission of the United Kingdom.

Just three observations. I think my UK colleague is right: there are two issues there. One is the elections and the method of organizing them in the UK; the second one has to do with ODIHR.

As we said two weeks ago at the SHDM "Challenges of election technologies and procedures", the process of elections and the process of election observation are somewhat related, but they are also separate processes. Many of our concerns are not so much about elections, though elections are very important, but in developing a process of observation that is credible to all. I remember asking for transparency, comparability of scale and equitableness as the ways in which the ODIHR's election observations must be conducted and judged. Raising questions about those operations is not the same as delegitimizing ODIHR. I regret that many of my colleagues believe that any discussions of ODIHR's operational not incapacities, but inequitable ways, somewhat appear like people are delegitimizing ODIHR. That again is a cheap-shot. One can want to improve the performance and the credibility of an operation without automatically delegitimizing the institution. That ought to be remembered. We think it is in all our interests to shore up, to maintain, to strengthen as much as possible ODIHR's operations in general and its credibility. The discussion here is about ODIHR's role in election observations. Tomorrow the topic may be about an ODIHR operation in another field besides elections.

Let me conclude by saying that I guess truth and fairness are important and we appreciate my British colleague's, even if indirect, agreement that reform takes a long time. Reforming reforms that may have been appropriate at a certain time in the evolution of a democracy and its institutions need updates. What the British people do in updating their own reforms is mostly their business, even though observers can think it may be too slow and too partial. I simply pick up on this point to say that if my calculation is right it is not 150 years, but it is more like 173 years. Reasonable, slow, well-measured, cautious, appropriate political evolution is not either the need or the prerogative of any one society. It is interesting that we ought to think as OK to take 170 years as an acceptable, a realistic, a fair period of time for a complex society to adjust, readjust, adapt, readapt, keep up with its own evolution. Therefore, please,

do not think that that pace should in any way imply that other societies like mine, can in 14 years, just about less than one tenth of the time, by the combination of magic, pressure and political will do that which in normal societies and old democracies, with the tremendously powerful sense of consensus and agreement and convergence and legitimacy may take 170 years. I wish everybody around this table had the candor of my British colleague to look backwards and take a look at how long political evolution on the road to democracy takes in general, has taken recently and might take in the near future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.