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

**In response to the European Union statement
on the Armenian Human Rights Ombudsman's report into the events of 1 March
delivered by Ambassador Jivan Tabibian
at the 712th Meeting of the Permanent Council
May 8, 2008**

Mr. Chairman,

The Armenian delegation thanks the European Union for having seen, read, and studied the report of our Ombudsman. This was a noticeably short European Union statement and from Armenia's point of view I can suggest that it could have been even shorter if the first paragraph, for the sake of avoiding repetition had been dropped. As the European Union told us it was already touched upon, declared, made official on the 4th of March and repeating it is perplexing for the Armenian delegation. The Armenian delegation is disappointed by that repetition.

The interesting thing is that, coming to the heart of the matter, this report is not only a report on the events of March 1st. The report which is around 60 pages discusses the entire context: pre, during, post and after the elections and makes a very thorough analysis of the kind of political, social, economic and cultural interests and the expressions that led to what is the most commonly used word by that report which is "polarization".

We just want to bring up to date the European Union and the rest of our partners here about what has happened since March 20th. The Armenian Government has met with the European Union representative of course, Mr. Semneby on March 21st. The Ago group on the 31st of March has also met with the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss these things. As you know the CiO's Ambassador Talvitie has been there twice, both on the second of March and the ninth of April. These contacts go on. And recently the Armenian National Assembly has formed through its Speaker, a parliamentary commission to look into what further improvements could be achieved. It has been a curious phenomenon: over the last few years there have been enacted many amendments to the Electoral Law, but somehow

those amendments have not met sufficiently the goal of reducing even further uncertain rules, hence certain electoral irregularities.

A footnote about the OSCE: the Prosecutor General's office has called through the Head of Mission in Yerevan, for OSCE experts. This is, the Prosecutor General wanting experts to help in the investigations and we assume, the office in Yerevan with advice from higher authority, perhaps the CiO or the CPC has refused the request by saying that the OSCE does not have such experts. A similar request was made to the United Nations and they also had basically desisted from responding positively by claiming they were not really qualified to do that.

Let me conclude by talking about that report for a minute more. That report, to my satisfaction, which I read very carefully made me curious about the following. In what language was it available to the European Union since it is written in solid Armenian? I do not know what version, what summary or digest, and I really would like to know as a matter of personal curiosity, the drafters of comments about this report or similar reports, have actually seen or read them. Or is this a matter of filtering upward where at each step a layer of meaning and detail and analysis and substance is lost and what is left is so to speak supposedly the concentrated juice? That process may very well represent some kind of reduction by attrition.

The Armenian delegation is very satisfied that our Ombudsman was active, alert and fair. What we noticed is that at no time did he try to exonerate the authorities but he also never exculpated the opposition.

Personally it was instructive, and for all those who seem to repeatedly have interest in Armenia's progress towards further democratization they can do worst than looking at such a document as the Ombudsman's report to show the level of clear thinking and free thinking that are still available in our public discourse.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.