



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council Nr 920 Vienna, 16 July 2012

EU statement on the parliamentary elections in Georgia

The European Union acknowledges the European aspirations and European choice of Georgia and its commitment to build deep and sustainable democracy. The EU welcomes the progress made by Georgia in its modernization and reform efforts in recent years. It is essential that Georgia maintains this momentum and continues on its path of transformation.

We are pleased that the relationship between the EU and Georgia has been developing rapidly and that good progress has been made on the negotiations of the Association Agreement, including on a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area. Important steps have also been made towards EU visa liberalization.

The parliamentary elections to be held in October will be an important indicator of the progress achieved. The EU welcomes improvements concerning the electoral framework. At the same time, the EU notes that important areas remain to be addressed, such as the existing inequalities in the size of electoral districts.

The EU welcomes the early invitation to ODIHR to observe the elections. We note the concerns expressed in the report of the ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission with regard to the polarization of the political

environment, to political party and campaign financing and to media coverage. In this regard, we also stress the need to prevent the potential misuse of administrative resources and to address alleged intimidation of supporters of opposition parties in the regions. We welcome the actions taken so far and commend the recent adoption of the 'must carry/must offer' rule in the regulations governing the activities of cable operators during the election campaign and we encourage further measures to address identified shortcomings.

The EU underlines the importance of the October 2012 parliamentary elections meeting international standards and being conducted in an environment of media freedom and pluralism, fair competition, genuine participation and transparency. The EU will continue to follow developments closely in this regard.

With a solid democratic foundation, Georgia can continue to accelerate the process of political association and economic integration with the European Union. The EU stands ready to continue to support further reforms in Georgia guided by the values laid down by the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the EU. Finally, the EU reiterates the importance it attaches to intensified relations with Georgia and invites the Georgian Government to make full use of the opportunities offered by the Eastern Partnership and the European Neighbourhood Policy.

The Acceding Country Croatia*, the Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Iceland+ and Serbia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.