



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

Statement
on Russian Duma elections
delivered by Ambassador Jivan Tabibian
at the 691st Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
December 6, 2007

Mr. Chairman,

What is so reassuring about the Permanent Council is that one can be absent as long as he wants. He comes back and it is the same scene with the same predictable sides, the same types of judgments; I feel therefore as if I have not missed a day. I missed the great food in Madrid but here I do not seem to have missed much.

During elections around the OSCE area, Armenia is involved in all the potential, actual or organized observer operations: the Parliamentary Assembly, the Council of Europe, the CIS and the OSCE. We have a very awkward situation. From our experience it seems that some of those judgments depend very much on who is doing the judging. For whatever reason, there seem to be no observations or judgments untainted by political interest. At least in my personal life I would not know how to decontaminate any political statement from political intent and political interest.

The interesting thing about this is something like this. Muslims have a very good concept. Once the Prophet was no longer there to arbitrate, adjudicate and prove what was right, for several centuries as the text of the Holy Koran was being interpreted, the major criterion became something called '*Esnad*', stipulating that truth depended on the authority of the Source. This is a problem that has faced many communities, organizations, religions and political organizations.

In the case of the parliamentary Elections in the Russian Federation on December 2nd, 2007, as member of one of the groups of observers, our opinion was quite different than that of the observers of same other groups. Had we been able to also be on the ODIHR mission, - we had submitted candidates- we would have probably had even another impression, because it is not simply the name of the observing organization that varies but its social organization, its composition, the guide book from which it quotes, the methodology with which it observes, the criteria, standards and so on and so forth.

We will conclude by saying that the last two weeks there were two popular votes going on; last Sunday there were the elections in the Russian Federation and the referendum in Venezuela. While following these two events, it came to my mind that at the end of the Venezuelan referendum, our friend Mr. Hugo Chavez, whatever the adjective that precedes him as a populist or demagogue or socialist, lost his referendum. I was reflecting on that. From my long experience had he won, there probably would have been a huge brouhaha because the "*bien pensants*" had already

decided that he was a tyrant and a dictator. I am just trying to illustrate an ironic and profound issue.

All our standards and commitments of Copenhagen are real and valid. We subscribe to them. They are meaningful. Nevertheless we are caught in a slight contradiction. The contradiction is that in some countries when some people in power, incumbents do not lose, elections are seen as questionable. Had the people in Venezuela not chosen what they did and Chavez had not lost, many would have undoubtedly assumed that there were Mickey Mouse shenanigans going on in Caracas.

These are things to reflect on. As I said, everything that has been said here somehow has a contradicting echo. Our experiences contradict those of some, agree with those of others; and that is all we have to say.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.