

# Press Release

## Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

Communication Division

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## Congress mission welcomes first election of the Yerevan mayor and calls for a better democratic culture in Armenia

Strasbourg, 01.06.2009 – "Our satisfaction in seeing the citizens electing their city council, has been tempered by deficiencies in the conduct of the vote", said the head of the Congress observation delegation to Yerevan, Nigel Mermagen (UK, ILDG).

The Congress delegation welcomed the fact that by these elections, Armenia proceeded on its way to implement local democracy. The overall organisation of the elections has been broadly carried out in compliance with European standards. In this respect, the election observation mission of the Congress noted a considerable step forward in comparison to the local elections which took place in Yerevan in September 2008.

Nevertheless, the Congress delegation found that the political actors in Armenia should change attitude and behaviour so that the practical conduct of elections, as well as the democratic culture of the country could further improve in the future.

"Democracy is not only about the organisational framework of elections. It is about electoral conduct and culture. Elections have to be clear, fair and transparent even beyond polling stations", concluded Nigel Mermagen.

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe was the only international observer which monitored the municipal elections on 31 May in Yerevan. From 3 to 6 May a three-member pre-election mission was carried out. The actual observation mission was organised from 27 May to 1 June. It included nine Congress members and three members of the European Union Committee of Regions from United Kingdom, San Marino, Poland, Italy, Hungary, France, Estonia and Belgium.

During both the pre-election and the election observation missions, the members of the delegation met with representatives of the government, the political parties and the media as well as with NGOs and Ambassadors.

### Contact in Yerevan:

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The Congress has two chambers, the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions.

It brings together 318 full and 318 substitute members representing more than 200 000 European territorial communities.

President of the Congress: Yavuz Milden (Turkey, EPP/CD), President of the Chamber of Regions: Ludmila Sfirloaga (Romania, SOC),

President of the Chamber of Local Authorities: Ian Micallef (Malta, EPP/CD).

Political Groups: Socialist Group (SOC), Group of the European People's Party – Christian Democrats (EPP/CD),  
Independent and Liberal Democrat Group (ILDG).