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## **Congress delegation calls for a strong commitment by political parties to local democracy in Armenia**

Yerevan, 24.09.2012 - "Our satisfaction with the fact that these elections take place according to international standards is mitigated by the lack of commitment by political parties to local governance," said Henry FERAL (France, EPP), Head of the delegation of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe for the observation of local elections in Armenia.

Following the observation of partial local elections held on 9 and 23 September 2012(\*) the Congress delegation noted with satisfaction that the voting process was well organised, and calm with a satisfactory level of voter participation. Although no obvious fraud was detected by the observers, the issue of possible vote buying was raised by many stakeholders.

However, the delegation noted the lack of commitment of political parties to local democracy with regret. While recognizing that this is due to various reasons, such as lack of financial resources, staff and candidates, it believes that political parties do not pay enough attention to democracy and governance at the local level.

Moreover, while welcoming citizen's initiatives which contributed to the electoral process, the Congress delegation calls for greater involvement of civil society as a whole.

The Congress was the only international observer to monitor these local elections. The mission took place from September 6 to 10 and 19 to 25 September 2012. The Congress delegation, comprising 14 members plus four members of the Committee of the Regions of the European Union, met with representatives of the Government, members of Parliament, representatives of political parties, members of the diplomatic corps, representatives of the international community as well as representatives of the media and NGOs.

\* On 9 September 2012, the Congress delegation was deployed in the regions of Armavir, Ararat, Lori, Shiraz; on 23 September 2012, it was deployed in the regions of Gegharqunig, Aragatsothn, Kotayq, Tavush, Vayots Dzor.

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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: Keith Whitmore (United Kingdom, ILDG), President of the Chamber of Regions: Herwig van Staa (Austria, EPP/CD), President of the Chamber of Local Authorities: Jean-Claude Frécon (France, SOC)

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

