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## **Congress adopts a Recommendation on the local elections in Georgia**

Strasbourg 15 October 2014 –The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe debated on 14 October, a report and a Recommendation on the local elections held in Georgia on 15 June 2014.

Jos Wienen (Netherlands, EPP/CCE), Congress rapporteur, welcomed the generally calm and peaceful manner in which the vote had been conducted, which constitutes another important step in strengthening Georgia's democracy, in particular, at the local level. "This was not to be taken for granted after a very controversial electoral campaign including harsh rhetoric and violent actions," he underlined. "Georgia's potential to organise future elections in a genuinely democratic manner stands and falls with the maturity and responsibility of the political actors. A zero-tolerance policy towards electoral violence and degrading or hateful discourse has to be conceived with a view to the next elections" Jos Wienen added.

He also welcomed the improvement, since the last observation carried out by the Congress in 2010, of media freedom, access of the political contestants to the media, openness of the electorate and the absence of pressure on voters.

Addressing the session on behalf of the 6 members of the EU Committee of the Regions who had participated in this observation mission, Jerzy Zająkala, Poland (UEN-EA) considered these elections particularly important in the context of the recent signature of the association agreement between Georgia and the European Union.

Based on the observations made during the mission, the Congress recommends further improvements concerning: a more balanced composition of electoral commissions; the nomination of independent candidates and counting procedures.

Finally, the Congress encouraged the Georgian authorities to revise specific legal provisions including residence requirements for passive voting rights at local level, equality of the vote and no-confidence procedures against directly elected mayors and *gamgebelis*.

Invited to address the Session, Tengiz Shergelashvili, Deputy Minister for Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia, welcomed the on-going co-operation between the Congress and Georgia, underlining, in particular, the implementation of Congress recommendations; among them the direct election of mayors and *gamgebelis* and the separation of functions between elected representatives and executive bodies.

### [Report CPL\(27\)5](#)

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: Jean-Claude Frécon (France, SOC), President of the Chamber of Local Authorities: Anders Knape (Sweden, EPP/CCE), President of the Chamber of Regions: Gudrun Mosler-Törnström (Austria, SOC)

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

