

Plenary Session 2: Democratic institutions, including:

- **Democracy at the national, regional and local levels**
- **Democratic elections**

Delivered by Mr. Hakob Sargsyan, Head of the OSCE and Conventional Arms Control Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia

Thank you, Madam Moderator,

Democratic elections are fundamental to the functioning of democracies, serving as the primary mechanism through which citizens express their will and participate in governance. Fair and transparent elections promote public trust in government institutions, which is essential for a healthy democracy.

For Armenia, the Velvet Revolution of 2018 marked a turning point, leading to calls for greater democratic reforms and enhanced electoral processes. Our commitment to democracy has been reaffirmed through free and fair elections, most notably the parliamentary elections in 2021. These elections were recognized by ODIHR and other reputable organizations as largely transparent and competitive, showcasing the vibrant political landscape that emerged from the revolution. Various esteemed international reports including those of ODIHR, Freedom House, European Union and others highlighted the commitment to democratic principles in Armenia's electoral processes.

Colleagues,

In contrast to democratic societies, electoral practices in neighboring Azerbaijan follow a different trajectory. It is evident that these practices fall short of democratic standards, as reports from numerous international organizations, including the OSCE/ODIHR, Freedom House, Human Rights Watch, the European Parliament, International Republican Institute, and other reputable organizations have raised serious concerns about the integrity of these elections, which were characterized by limited political competition, widespread irregularities, including voter intimidation, lack of genuine competition and transparency, and restrictions on fundamental freedoms.

Madam Moderator,

Regrettably, the absence of democratic elections and practices overall not only poses challenges to the country itself but also has broader implications for regional

stability. Such governments may pursue aggressive foreign policies to divert attention from domestic issues, which can heighten military tensions and lead to conflicts, ultimately affecting regional security.

In this regard, Armenia reaffirms its commitment to uphold the principles of democracy and human rights. The Velvet Revolution stands as a testament to the power of collective action and the importance of creating a government that is truly representative of its people.

I thank you.