**STATEMENT**

**on the Electoral Code**

Helsinki Citizens' Assembly-Vanadzor states that the process aimed at the so-called reforms of the RA Electoral Code adopted by the RA National Assembly just a few weeks ago, on May 25, 2016, can be of some significance if such reforms result in full adoption of all the recommendations of the civil society in the Republic of Armenia, as well as the OSCE ODIHR and the Venice Commission addressed to the RA, recommendations that have not received a proper attention by the current political majority.

In particular, the restrictions below should be removed:

* mandatory testing for observers;
* the maximum number of observers and mass media representatives;
* reduction of the powers and functions of observers, particularly the effective functions of identifying and reducing violations of electoral rights and electoral processes stipulated by the previous code, restrictions on information sources for reports, the right to appeal election results, inadmissibility of persecution against observers;
* the maximum number of parties to form a political coalition;
* nomination of candidates by civil initiatives in the elections of Councils of Elders in Vanadzor, Gyumri and Yerevan cities.

To ensure real electoral diversity and equal opportunities in the Republic of Armenia, the district lists intended for the RA National Assembly elections should be eliminated and elections of all the deputies should be held on the entire territory of Armenia only by a single principle, i.e. the proportional principle by thus excluding the principle of elections by the current influence zones of the oligarchs, which will as well ensure meaningful and real guarantees for the representation of both sexes.

We attach importance to effective investigation into electoral frauds and restricting the right of the persons who commit such frauds to take part in subsequent elections in any status /proxy, observer, commission member, candidate/ other than that of a voter.

Without overcoming the challenges above, the resolution of the essential issues related to videotaping of the whole electoral process and ensuring access to voter lists cannot contribute to effective civic oversight and public trust in elections.

**Helsinki Citizens' Assembly-Vanadzor**

**June 16, 2016**