

Statement by Chief of Government Staff David Sargsyan at the presentation of the new system of e-governance

Honorable Mr. Prime Minister,
Dear Members of Government,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are presenting today the Mulberry system of e-governance.

You may be aware that the introduction of a system of e-governance into the public sector was stipulated in the electoral program of RA President Serzh Sargsyan. Therefore, it was a key target in the program of government activities.

E-governance will enhance the quality of public services providing for higher efficiency and transparency.

The passage to e-governance implies online provision of services.

This is supposed to minimize the need in direct public servant-citizen contacts and reduce corruption risks.

Let me state some of its most important assets:

Firstly, electronic copies of all documents are circulated online among individual units and officers of State agencies.

Secondly, all correspondence between government agencies is carried out online. As a result, documents take 20% less time to circulate between State agencies.

For example, while formerly letters used to take a week to reach from Yerevan to Syunik marzpetaran, now they do so in a minute's time.

Thirdly, as government agencies started communicating online, the need arose to give legal power to the documents so circulated.

Electronic documents shall only have effect if backed by electronic signatures. Adopted as early as in 2005, the RA law on electronic signature has been ineffective ever since.

This is why in parallel to introducing e-government, the Government of Armenia set up an e-signature certification center. It is just thanks to such signatures online correspondence between State agencies is being certified now.

The newly established certification center made it possible for the State Revenue Committee to create an electronic system for the receipt of electronic signatures from taxpayers.

Fourthly, the system has another key asset. It creates and keeps the history of movement of any document. This means that at any point we can see or find out when exactly and by whom a document was processed, when and to whom it was sent over, what opinions were voiced during discussions

Fifthly, by keeping record of all circulated documents we will be able to control the deadlines and get reports on non-performed or outstanding assignments.

Sixthly, we have stated repeatedly that as part of the public sector reform, description of business processes is being carried out in State agencies. Hence, this electronic control system makes it possible to trace back the full circuit of business processes.

For instance, if a State body is responsible for granting licenses to natural or legal persons, it will have define precisely the list of responsibilities, the procedures to follow and the deadlines set for each type of document.

The system of e-governance provides for due compliance with the procedure in line with the established order enabling procedural auditors to detect all incidences of procedural irregularity.

Seventhly, the system offers vast opportunities for the search of documents which enhances archival work efficiency considerably.

Eighthly, a new system of performance assessment has been introduced in State agencies since 2008. Individual units and officers in ministries and State agencies are assigned pre-established work schedules for the year ahead, subject to assessment at specified intervals within the period under review.

The system of e-governance enables a supervisor to assess the task (the supervisors cannot assign a task without assessing it) and later on give a summary estimate of the work done by the officer in charge.

And lastly, perhaps the most important feature of this system is that it allows the citizens applying to State bodies to check the status of their applications through the government's website.

Any citizen applying to those public authorities running a system of e-governance is assigned a 12-digit control number through which they can follow through their applications. They can get the names of the officers in charge and see when to expect an answer.

Not getting an answer within the specified deadlines, the applicants can struggle more effectively for the defense of their right to information and answer. Once processed, the answers will be available on the website bearing a legally binding and certified electronic signature. Should they wish so, the applicants shall have the hard copies of the answers.

The application tracking facility is available to all such natural and juridical persons as may come in contact with public authorities. Other prospective facilities will be provided after summarizing the current stage of its operations.

This system of e-governance has been introduced in some 25 agencies out of a total of 44 State agencies. Installation work will be completed in 5 other agencies within the forthcoming month.

The full program is due to be completed during 2011.

The availability of appropriate electronic data exchange channels is the most important precondition for system introduction.

A high-speed network of e-communication is up between the State agencies, which will allow us to develop new projects: installation of interdepartmental video communications, build-up of a single database and so on. Design work is underway to that effect.

In conclusion, I wish to thank all those who over the past two years did their best to give effect to this important project and first of all, the World Bank and the European Union.

I express special gratitude to:

- British AI Partnership Ltd, chief developer of the system;
- Armenia-based HELIX Ltd, designer of the interface providing online contact with citizens,
- Armenia-based U-com Ltd, developer of the interdepartmental high-speed electronic network,
- Chiefs of staff and heads of secretariats of the agencies concerned, as well as those IT experts involved in installation activities.