



INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION

Georgia — Extraordinary Presidential Election, 5 January 2008

STATEMENT OF PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Tbilisi, 6 January 2008 – The International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) for the 5 January 2008 extraordinary presidential election in Georgia is a joint undertaking of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and the European Parliament (EP).

The election is assessed in line with OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and standards for democratic elections and national legislation. This statement of preliminary findings and conclusions is delivered prior to the completion of the election process. The final assessment of the election will depend, in part, on the conduct of the remaining stages of the election process, including the tabulation and announcement of final results and the handling of possible post-election day complaints or appeals. The OSCE/ODIHR will issue a comprehensive final report, including recommendations for potential improvements, approximately two months after the completion of the election process. The delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe will present its report at the next plenary session of the Assembly on 21 January.

Simultaneously with the presidential election, two non-binding plebiscites were held to consult voters on the date of the next parliamentary elections and on NATO membership. The IEOM followed the plebiscites only to the extent that they affected the conduct of the presidential election.

The institutions represented in the IEOM thank the Georgian authorities for their co-operation and stand ready to continue their support for the conduct of democratic elections.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

While the 5 January 2008 extraordinary presidential election in Georgia was in essence consistent with most OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and standards for democratic elections, significant challenges were revealed which need to be addressed urgently. This election was the first genuinely competitive presidential election, which enabled the Georgian people to express their political choice.

The election campaign, however, was conducted in a highly polarized political environment. A lack of trust and the pervasiveness of alleged campaign-related violations – only a few of which were brought to the CEC and courts – were not conducive to a constructive, issue-based election campaign. The distinction between state activities and the former President's campaign was sometimes blurred, and contributed to an inequitable campaign environment. Nonetheless, all candidates were generally able to campaign freely around the country.

Georgia has a diverse media environment, generally enabling freedom of expression and offering voters a wide range of political views. The media's campaign coverage, which included talk shows, televised debates and allocation of free airtime enabled voters to become familiar with candidate platforms. The news coverage of private broadcasters monitored showed imbalance in favour of the

ruling party's candidate. Although, the news on public TV was somewhat more balanced in the time allocated to all candidates, the tone of its coverage favoured the former President.

The recent amendments to the Election Code – though adopted very late – enhanced the inclusiveness of the election administration by introducing political party representation in the Central Election Commission (CEC). Despite the short timeframe, the CEC prepared the election in an overall professional manner; however, on contentious issues its members were not always observing the neutrality required of election administration, and acted in a partisan manner.

The CEC undertook significant efforts to improve the accuracy of the voter list and voters were provided with a wide range of possibilities to check their records. Despite these efforts, inaccuracies on the voter list remain.

Positive aspects of the election process included:

- The Unified Election Code (UEC) is generally adequate for the conduct of democratic elections, if implemented in good faith. Recent amendments to the UEC address a number of long-standing recommendations of the OSCE/ODIHR and the Council of Europe.
- During the pre-electoral period, the CEC operated in a transparent manner, holding frequent meetings open to observers and the media. Election commissions at all levels were co-operative.
- A voter education campaign through the national media and training of election officials were carried out.
- Transparency of the process was enhanced by the accreditation of a large number of domestic non-party observer organizations.
- Election material was produced in the languages of national minorities.
- An Inter-Agency Task Force for Free and Fair Elections was set up by the Acting President to liaise with observer organizations and to address concerns raised. At times, the Acting President personally intervened in response to opposition's grievances.

However, the following additional shortcomings were noted:

- The campaign was overshadowed by widespread allegations of intimidation and pressure, a number of which were substantiated, among others on public-sector employees.
- The implementation of social welfare programmes was frequently combined with campaigning for the former President.
- Pertinent inconsistencies, gaps, and ambiguities remaining in the Election Code left room for varying interpretation.
- In adjudicating complaints, the CEC failed to follow important legal procedures. The CEC and the courts tended to stretch the law beyond sound interpretation to favor the ruling party's candidate and public officials.
- Election-day procedures adopted by the CEC lacked clarity and detail.

Election day was generally peaceful. Overall, voting was assessed positively by a large majority of IEOM observers. However, organizational and procedural shortcomings were observed, especially with regard to inconsistent application of inking procedures, intended as a safeguard against multiple voting. This is especially significant given the reintroduction of election-day voter registration and the scale by which it was used. The vote count was evaluated less positively, with many significant procedural shortcomings observed, which may have been complicated by last-minute revisions of election-day procedures.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Background

On 7 November, six days of demonstrations called by a newly formed bloc of opposition parties culminated in the violent dispersal of protesters by the police. The protesters demanded, *inter alia*, the rescheduling of parliamentary elections from autumn to spring 2008, the transformation of Georgia into a parliamentary republic, and the resignation of then-President Mikheil Saakashvili.

On the same day, a state of emergency was imposed by the President, who asserted that the protests were part of an attempt to overthrow the Government. The state of emergency was lifted on 16 November.

On 8 November, the then-President proposed to shorten his mandate and subsequently stepped down on 25 November, enabling Parliament to call an extraordinary presidential election for 5 January 2008. The Speaker of Parliament, Nino Burjanadze, became Acting President. A political dialogue led to amendments of the electoral legal framework and to the calling of a plebiscite on the timing of the next parliamentary elections.

Legal Framework and Election System

The Constitution of Georgia guarantees fundamental civil and political rights necessary for the conduct of democratic elections. The primary legislation regulating elections is the Unified Election Code (UEC), adopted in 2001 and amended numerous times.

Significant amendments to the UEC were adopted on 22 November 2007, and further amendments were passed on 12 December, after the election had been called. Although these amendments generally introduced improvements to the law¹, enacting modifications so close to an election is not in line with the Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe. While pertinent inconsistencies, gaps, and ambiguities leave room for varying interpretation, the UEC is generally adequate for the conduct of democratic elections, if implemented in good faith.

The President of Georgia is elected for a five-year term. If no candidate receives an absolute majority of valid votes in the first round, a second round is held two weeks later between the two candidates who received the highest number of votes.

Election Administration

This election was administered by a three-tiered election administration comprising the Central Election Commission (CEC), 76 District Election Commissions (DECs) and 3,511 Precinct Election Commissions (PECs), 44 of which were established abroad. The recent amendments to the UEC changed the composition of the CEC and PECs, which now include members appointed by seven political parties. While the new CEC composition formula resulted in a welcome greater political inclusiveness, the commission's members were often not observing the neutrality required of election administration, and many decisions were voted in a partisan manner.

¹ A number of long-standing OSCE/ODIHR and Council of Europe recommendations have been taken into account.

The CEC operated in a transparent fashion, holding frequent meetings open to representatives of political parties, media and observers. However, the results of voting by the CEC were not always announced, and it was at times unclear whether a decision had been adopted.

The CEC instruction on election-day procedures was not comprehensive and failed to address in sufficient detail issues not covered by the UEC. Some ten days before the election, a PEC manual on election-day procedures was produced. While it covered all stages of the voting and counting procedures in detail, it was only available when training of PEC members was nearly completed. The CEC also conducted a voter education campaign through the national media on issues such as voter lists, secrecy of the vote, falsification of IDs and multiple voting.

The composition of DEC's, whose powers were recently reduced, remains without party representation. Prior to election day, DEC's in general appeared well organized, holding ad hoc sessions open to observers and media. In a number of DEC's, opposition-party nominees were not informed of the inaugural meetings of PEC's.

The opposition parties were underrepresented in managerial positions at the PEC level. The ruling United National Movement (UNM) held a de facto majority in PEC's. According to the CEC, DEC-appointed PEC members were elected as chairpersons in most PEC's, while only two chairpersons were opposition appointees.

Voter Registration

The CEC is responsible for the maintenance of the centralized voter register. In the run-up to the election, the CEC carried out a door-to-door voter list verification, which resulted in a substantial number of revisions. The voter list was subsequently available for public scrutiny for one week. Voters could check their records and request amendments through Internet, a CEC hotline, or in person at DEC's and PEC's. As a result of public scrutiny, some 2,000 voters were added to the list and about 3,000 deceased persons were removed. The CEC reported that data recording was systematized and new software enabling multiple entry tracking installed. As of 2 January 2008, 3,352,448 voters were registered. Recent amendments to the UEC reintroduced election-day registration.

Despite major verification efforts undertaken, perceived and real inaccuracies in the voter lists remained a major concern for many stakeholders. Political parties and NGOs provided OSCE/ODIHR observers with some examples of multiple and incomplete records, omissions of eligible voters, spelling and typographical errors, and cases of deceased persons remaining on the list. The CEC acknowledged that mistakes might have remained, citing lack of time due to the unexpected announcement of the election. At least six complaints submitted to the CEC by opposition parties, with over 40,000 voters' records claimed as being inaccurate. All these complaints were submitted after the legal deadline for voter list verification. The CEC stated that cases listed in the complaints were checked and necessary changes were made when inaccuracies were confirmed.

Candidate Registration

This was the first genuinely competitive presidential election in Georgia. Candidate registration was overall inclusive and transparent. Twenty-two prospective presidential candidates submitted applications for registration. The CEC allowed 19 of them to begin the collection of 50,000 supporting signatures required for registration. Thirteen parties and initiative groups submitted signature lists to the CEC within the legal deadline. In line with the latest amendments, the

candidates were given two days to eliminate mistakes in their registration documents, including to submit additional support signatures if necessary. Seven candidates were ultimately registered. Four applicants who were denied registration because of insufficient numbers of signatures unsuccessfully challenged the relevant CEC decisions in court.

The seven candidates were Mr. Saakashvili of the UNM; Levan Gachechiladze of the United Public Movement (UPM), a bloc of nine opposition parties; Davit Gamkrelidze (New Rights Party); Shalva Natelashvili (Labour Party of Georgia); Gia Maisashvili (Party of the Future); Irina Sarishvili (Hope Party); and Arkadi Patarkatsishvili, an independent candidate.

Campaign Environment

The highly polarized political environment, the lack of trust, the pervasiveness of alleged violations, speculation about post-election demonstrations, and accusations of preparations for a coup, were not conducive to a constructive, issue-based election campaign. Opposition candidates expressed a deep mistrust of the election administration and the authorities. Most opposition candidates seemed to focus on charges of electoral violations rather than on policy issues. UNM officials claimed the intention was to cast doubt over the election results. Some opposition candidates stated that they would respect the outcome of a fair election, but persistently questioned the fairness of the process.

The blurring of the line between state and political party, which is not in compliance with paragraph 5.4 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document, was an issue and created an unequal campaign environment. The distribution of vouchers for such things as utilities and medical supplies to vulnerable groups was criticized as an alleged misuse of budgetary funds in support of Mr. Saakashvili. UNM officials said the voucher distribution was planned before the election was called. However, there is evidence that the distribution was used for campaign purposes, blurring the separation between state activities and the UNM candidate's election campaign. The vouchers prominently displayed that they were a subsidy from the President. Healthcare vouchers, as well as employment scheme leaflets, featured visually outstanding number "5"s – the number on the ballot under which the UNM has run in elections since 2004. Distributors of vouchers sometimes asked recipients whether they would vote for Mr. Saakashvili, and asked them to sign documents confirming their support. Vouchers were in some cases distributed from UNM offices.

Moreover, in reply to allegations that Mr. Saakashvili misused state resources, the UNM responded that the party had paid for such services. The contentiousness of this issue was fuelled by the lack of provision for candidates to supply reports on campaign financing before the election. The inauguration of a new pipeline by Mr. Saakashvili in Akhalkalaki, as well as the official opening of Tbilisi-Senaki-Leselidze highway lighting system, were given the appearance of presidential events, not in accord with Mr. Saakashvili's status as a candidate who does not currently hold public office.

The campaign was overshadowed by widespread allegations of intimidation and pressure, among others on public-sector employees. These included a number of confirmed cases of pressure on opposition supporters by the police and local officials to desist from campaigning, threats of arbitrary arrest or job dismissal and cases of landlords who were pressurized not to let premises for use as opposition campaign offices. Isolated instances of violence against opposition activists, including kidnapping, were reported and verified. Such practices are inconsistent with paragraph 7.7 of the OSCE Copenhagen Document, which requires that campaigning be conducted in a fair and free atmosphere without administrative action, violence or intimidation.

In general, all candidates were able freely to campaign around the country. The intensity of campaigning varied considerably and was more active in Tbilisi than in most of the regions. The main campaign activity was the rallies of the candidates, four of whom toured the country extensively. Mr. Patarkatsishvili was abroad throughout the campaign period having been accused by the authorities of plotting to overthrow the Government. On 24 and 25 December, the Government released recordings which it claimed incriminated him in a post-election coup attempt.

An Inter-Agency Task Force for Free and Fair Elections was established to liaise with international and domestic observers. The OSCE/ODIHR EOM noted that, at times, opposition grievances were addressed through the Acting President's intervention. In the last days of the campaign, the Acting President and the Interior Minister made strong appeals to UNM activists, police and officials to observe the law and to refrain for any actions that might undermine the integrity of the election.

Participation of Women and National Minorities

There are neither legal barriers to the participation of women in elections, nor legal provisions to promote their participation. While there are some prominent women in politics, women are under-represented in political life and at the top level of election administration. Irina Sharishvili was the only female candidate, and there is only one woman among the CEC members. According to CEC data, the gender balance was more equal in DEC's (42 per cent women) and PEC's (50 per cent). In polling stations visited by IEOM observers on election day, 55 per cent of PEC chairpersons were women.

National minorities make up some 16 per cent of the population, with Azeris and Armenians being the most significant minority groups. A Roma population exists, but is not officially recognized. National minorities enjoy full political rights under the Constitution. They were generally under-represented in DEC's in most parts of the country where they are found in large numbers. The CEC provided PEC's in regions with significant minority populations, upon request, with election materials in Russian, Azeri, Armenian and Ossetian.

The Media

Georgia has a diverse media landscape, including public and private broadcasters and some 200 press outlets. The media environment was affected by the recent state of emergency, during which broadcast media faced restrictions in their reporting, and three TV channels were taken off the air. While all broadcasters resumed normal operation after the state of emergency was lifted, Imedi TV, a popular private channel perceived as pro-opposition, which was raided by police on 7 November and had its license temporarily suspended, was only able to resume broadcasting on 12 December, after the campaign had already started.

A wide range of views was available to voters, especially through talk shows, televised debates and free airtime, which gave the electorate a valuable opportunity to learn about candidates' and parties' views and campaign programs. Public TV offered free airtime to all candidates, including those it was not obliged to offer it to.² A debate between the four main contestants did not take place as Mr. Saakashvili chose not to take part and his three main rivals conditioned their participation upon the opportunity to debate with him. This denied voters an opportunity to see these key candidates exchange policy views in an interactive format.

² Under the law, "qualified" subjects are candidates of political parties that are represented by a faction in the Parliament or received at least four per cent of the proportional vote in the last election, whereas "unqualified" subjects must demonstrate public support through opinion poll results in order to enjoy free airtime/space.

While the media in general enjoy freedom of expression, they are under strong influence from their owners and political patrons. Consequently, all five main TV stations were under a measure of influence from candidates and political parties. The campaign coverage in news programs lacked balance on most monitored TV stations, with Mr. Saakashvili generally receiving the most coverage. On the other hand, the newspapers monitored by the OSCE/ODIHR EOM provided a diverse range of opinions, with Mr. Saakashvili generally being the most often criticized candidate.

In the four weeks preceding the election, public TV devoted 27 per cent of its political and election prime-time news coverage to activities of Mr. Saakashvili, of which 98 per cent was positive or neutral. The next most covered candidate, Mr. Patarkatsishvili, received some 18 per cent, mainly in connection with his alleged involvement in a coup plot. Some 33 per cent of this coverage was negative. Mr. Gamkrelidze and Mr. Gachechiladze, received 17 and 15 per cent of the coverage respectively, which was mostly positive or neutral. The news coverage became more balanced in the last two weeks prior to election day, with a notable decrease in the amount of prime-time news coverage devoted to Mr. Saakashvili (27 per cent against 41 per cent in the first two weeks of the campaign). The tone of his coverage, however, remained unchanged.

Two nationwide private TV channels, Rustavi 2 and Mze, showed clear support for Mr. Saakashvili and provided him with substantial prime-time news coverage. For example, Rustavi 2, Mze and public TV broadcast live a 28-minute prime-time news item about a meeting of Mr. Saakashvili with teachers in Tbilisi. Other candidates did not receive such substantial coverage of their campaign events. In addition, no other candidate had a chance to directly address the citizens with a televised New Year greeting, which was broadcast by all three channels.

Another national broadcaster, Imedi TV, offered its viewers a different picture of the campaign. While Mr. Saakashvili received 31 per cent of the channel's news coverage, 19 per cent was negative in tone. The next most covered candidate, Mr. Patarkatsishvili, received 26 per cent of the coverage, 29 per cent of which was negative in tone. Tbilisi-based local TV Kavkazia was critical of Mr. Saakashvili and provided a platform for his main rivals.

On 26 December, six leading journalists announced their decision to leave Imedi TV in connection with the accusations against Imedi's co-owner Arkadi Patarkatsishvili. Imedi TV's management consequently temporarily suspended broadcasts in order to "distance themselves from dirty political games", alleging pressure from both Mr. Patarkatsishvili and the authorities.

The CEC conducted, for the first time, its own media monitoring, through a commercial company, and released three media monitoring reports. The methodology chosen, as well as the interpretation of the results of quantitative and qualitative analysis, have resulted in a positive assessment of the campaign coverage and did not identify any substantial imbalances in the news.

One of Mr. Gachechiladze's free-of-charge spots, which contained an announcement of one of his campaign events, was effectively censored by the CEC Chairperson, who argued it was not pre-electoral advertisement. The CEC rejected Mr. Gachechiladze's complaint without sound legal basis; the CEC's decision was upheld by the Tbilisi City Court.

The very high cost of paid political advertising on television limited the candidates' possibilities to campaign in the media. Three of them charged approximately ten times more for political advertising than for commercials. Two weeks before the election, public TV decreased its prices to

make them more accessible for candidates, however they still remained twice as high as commercial rates. Only Mr. Saakashvili was able to place paid spots on all four nationwide channels.

Complaints and Appeals

Despite numerous allegations of election-related violations, a relatively small number of official complaints were submitted to election commissions and courts. Few complaints were submitted to DEC's and regional courts, with the concentration of cases in Tbilisi.³ Opposition parties and NGOs explained this with a lack of trust in the impartiality of the election administration and courts in adjudication of election-related complaints. There are also credible reports that the public feared submitting complaints and witness statements on politically motivated offences.

Procedural provisions dealing with admissibility and adjudication of election-related complaints and appeals have proven to lack sufficient clarity, as complainants, election commissions, and courts grappled with interpreting and applying them. Also, some written complaints were not sufficiently detailed, and there were instances of duplicate filing in the CEC and court. Inconsistent and vague UEC provisions resulted in divergent legal interpretations being applied.

The CEC and courts received complaints about the alleged misuse of state and administrative resources and vote buying by the ruling party candidate, whose de-registration was requested. Also submitted were complaints alleging prohibited campaigning by public officials while conducting work duties. All campaign-related complaints, except one (alleging vote buying by Mr. Patarkatsishvili), were filed against the ruling party candidate or government officials. Both the CEC and courts tended to stretch the law beyond reasonable interpretation and without regard to its spirit, in favour of the ruling party candidate and public officials.

In its adjudication of complaints, the CEC failed to follow important procedures provided by domestic laws and international standards. Notably, CEC regulations do not adequately address how complaints are to be dealt with. CEC members seemingly lacked adjudication skills and often based decisions on political interests and not on sound interpretation of the law. The six opposition party appointees always voted in favor of finding the ruling party's candidate and public officials in violation of campaign laws, with the seven other members always voting against, resulting in rejection of all such complaints. Written CEC decisions on complaints often lacked sufficient elaboration of the facts and law on which they were based, and did not notify complainants of their right to appeal decisions to court.

The courts generally carried out open hearings on election-related cases in a professional manner. However, some written judgments did not lay out sufficient reasoning and most lacked sound legal basis, with all cases against Mr. Saakashvili and public officials rejected.

Reports were submitted to various law enforcement and governmental bodies, with allegations of intimidation, kidnappings and attacks on opposition supporters and close family members, some implicating law enforcement officials. The police did not appear to sufficiently investigate such complaints, and the Interior Ministry reported that many cases have already been closed for lack of evidence. The OSCE/ODIHR EOM is not aware of any criminal prosecutions being initiated in such cases.

³ During the pre-electoral period, the CEC received approximately 31 complaints, the Tbilisi City Court – 19 cases, the Tbilisi Court of Appeal – 6 cases, and a small number of complaints were received by DEC's and regional courts.

Domestic and International Observers

Georgian election legislation provides for domestic and international observation. The CEC registered observers from 34 domestic non-party organizations, 50 international organizations and 18 embassies. While observers have the right to observe the entire election process, domestic observers have to announce in advance which district each individual observer would be present in on election day. Candidates had the right to appoint proxies to every commission.

Election Day

Election day was generally peaceful. In a considerable number of precincts, however, the process was at times disorganized and chaotic. Preliminary CEC data put voter turnout at 56 per cent.

Opening procedures were assessed overall as good or very good in 91 per cent of polling stations visited, despite a number of procedural problems, including failure to properly seal the ballot boxes (6 per cent) or insert the control slips (4 per cent). Unauthorized persons were present during the opening in 17 per cent of polling stations, but did not appear to interfere in the process. IEOM observers reported limited delays (35 per cent) in opening of polling stations.

IEOM observers assessed voting as good to very good in 93 per cent of polling stations visited. However, there were considerable regional variations; in Samtskhe-Javakheti, 24 per cent were assessed as bad or very bad, in Kvemo Kartli and Shida Kartli 10 per cent, and in Kakheti 9 per cent.

The most widespread procedural violations were related to inking safeguards, with not all voters being checked for ink in 15 per cent of polling stations visited, and ink not always being applied in 12 per cent. In addition, IEOM observers reported that during 12 polling stations visits, voters who had already been inked were allowed to vote. Other violations included seemingly identical signatures (3 per cent), multiple and proxy voting (1 and 2 per cent, respectively) and family voting (5 per cent). In 3 per cent of polling stations, the ballot boxes were not properly sealed. IEOM observers witnessed four cases of ballot box stuffing, as well as one case of carousel voting.

A considerable number of voters were added to the additional voter list. In polling stations visited by IEOM observers throughout election day, an average of some 5 per cent of those who voted had been registered on election day. In 2 per cent of polling stations, voters were added to the additional list without providing proof that they are registered within the territory of the precinct. In 2 per cent of polling stations, voters were denied the right to vote for inappropriate reasons.

The presence of unauthorized persons, mostly police, was observed in 8 per cent of polling stations. In 13 cases, such persons were interfering in the work of the PEC. Domestic non-party observers were present in 94 per cent of polling stations visited, and candidate proxies, in 95 per cent. Frequently, the number of proxies per candidate exceeded that stipulated in the UEC.

The circumstances in and around polling stations were frequently problematic. Some 12 per cent of polling station premises were overcrowded, and outside 19 per cent of polling stations large numbers of voters were waiting to vote. Tension outside polling stations was noted in 2 per cent of reports, and inside the premises in 3 per cent. Outside many polling stations, buses transporting UNM supporters to vote were noted. Campaign material was noted inside 3 per cent of polling stations visited. In addition, observers found CEC-produced stickers with the text “Where will you

be on 5 January?”, with the “5” in a red circle visually resembling that used on Mr. Saakashvili’s campaign materials.

The vote count was evaluated less positively, with a significant number of IEOM observers assessing it as bad or very bad. In most polling stations observed, the counting process was very slow. A considerable number of PECs did not perform basic reconciliation procedures before opening the ballot boxes, such as establishing the number of voters who voted and entering it into the protocol. In nearly half of counts observed, voters’ choices were not read aloud during the count, and at times, PEC members and observers were not allowed to examine the ballots, in violation of the law. Determination of ballot validity was not always reasonable and consistent. Unauthorized persons frequently participated in the vote count.

Many PECs had problems completing the results protocol, and revised figures which had been entered into the protocol earlier. Occasionally, protocols had been pre-signed and completed in pencil rather than ink. The result protocols were often not posted for public scrutiny. While the CEC is posting precinct result protocols on its website for the first time, only a small number of protocols had been posted by mid-morning of the day following the election.

*This statement is also available in Georgian.
However, the English version remains the only official document.*

MISSION INFORMATION & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission opened in Tbilisi on 6 December with 41 experts and long-term observers deployed in Tbilisi and 10 regional centres. On election day, some 495 short-term observers were deployed in an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM), including a 66-member delegation from the OSCE PA, a 23-member delegation from the PACE, and a 16-member delegation from the European Parliament. In total, there were observers from 44 OSCE participating States. The IEOM observed voting in over 1,500 polling stations out of a total of 3,511, and counting in some 150 polling stations. The IEOM also observed proceedings in most of DECs.

Congressman Alcee Hastings (USA), Head of the OSCE PA delegation, was appointed as Special Co-ordinator by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office to lead the OSCE short-term observers. Mr. Mátyás Eörsi (Hungary) headed the delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and Ms. Marie Anne Isler Béguin (France) headed the delegation of the European Parliament. Ambassador Dieter Boden (Germany) is the Head of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission.

The IEOM wishes to thank the authorities of Georgia for the invitation to observe the election, the Central Election Commission for providing accreditation documents, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other state and local authorities for their assistance and cooperation. The IEOM also wishes to express appreciation to the OSCE Mission to Georgia and other international institutions for their co-operation and support.

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