

Kimmo Kiljunen leads OSCE Observation of Parliamentary Elections in Moldova and Kyrgyzstan

Finnish parliamentarian Kimmo Kiljunen led the OSCE election observation missions to Moldova and Kyrgyzstan on 6 March and 27 February respectively. On the request of OSCE PA President Alcee L. Hastings, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimijtri Rupel, had appointed Mr. Kiljunen as Special Co-ordinator for the observation of both elections.



Kimmo Kiljunen speaks to voters waiting to cast their ballots in Varantsa, Moldova

Moldova

Recalling the international observation mission's assessment of the 2001 Moldovan elections, which were found to be in accordance with OSCE commitments, Kimmo Kiljunen concluded that the March 6 elections in Moldova confirmed a negative trend noted in the 2003 local elections. "The fact that the 2005 parliamentary elections generally complied with OSCE standards was undercut by negative aspects of unequal campaign conditions and constrained media coverage that were already noted in the 2003 election and have no place in a democracy", said Mr. Kiljunen.

Presenting the conclusions of the International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) at a press conference in Chisinau on March 7 along with colleagues from the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, European Parliament and the OSCE-ODIHR, Mr. Kiljunen highlighted positive elements of the election process. The pluralistic party system in Moldova, an active civil society, and the increased number of woman candidates all contributed to the conclusion that the elections generally complied with most OSCE and Council of Europe election commitments. Yet biased television coverage, abuse of public resources, and attempts to prevent the election from unfolding in a free and competitive manner undermined the process.

One particular concern noted was the fact that people living on the left bank of the Nistru river were unable to vote in their own neighbourhoods, and had to travel to special polling stations. The inadequacy of this provisional solution was underlined by the IEOM.

The parliamentary elections in Moldova were observed by over 120 parliamentary observers as well as 380 short term observers from the OSCE-ODIHR. The OSCE PA delegation consisted of 53 Members of parliament from 16 countries.

Kyrgyzstan

Commenting on the February 27 elections in Kyrgyzstan, Mr. Kiljunen concluded that "these elections were more competitive than previous ones, but sadly this was undermined by vote buying, de-registration of candidates, interference with media and a worryingly low confidence in judicial and electoral institutions on the part of voters and candidates". In presenting the preliminary conclusions of the Observation Mission – a joint undertaking of the OSCE PA, the European Parliament and the OSCE-ODIHR – Mr. Kiljunen highlighted a number of negative aspects. In particular, repeated warnings in advance of the elections by high officials of the potential of civil war undermined the pre-election environment, as did the restrictive application of the Election Code, which cancelled the right to candidacy of a number of prominent individuals on the grounds that, as former diplomats, they had recently lived outside of the country. These, as well as other shortcomings, contributed to a lack of confidence in the electoral process.

Nonetheless, the International Election Observation Mission noted positive trends in some areas, including an improved legal framework, greater competition offering voters with a genuine choice in candidates, and improved transparency at polling stations.

At the press conference in Bishkek on 28 February, Mr. Kiljunen also stressed the willingness of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to co-operate with the newly elected Parliament.

The IEOM consisted of some 175 observers, including an OSCE PA delegation of ten representatives from six OSCE participating States.

Tromsø Conference

Bringing together Parliamentarians, Government Ministers and other experts, the upcoming OSCE PA Sub-Regional Conference in Tromsø, Norway, will focus on pressing topics such as climate change, petroleum exploration and nuclear waste, addressing issues of relevance to all three OSCE dimensions and to all participating States. The Conference will be followed by a tour of the Polaria wildlife centre and surroundings. Delegates are encouraged to register by March 21 for the Conference on 12-13 May.

For more information and to download registration forms, please visit www.oscepa.org.

