

News from Copenhagen

Soares delivers OSCE election observation statement in Kazakhstan

The 15 January parliamentary elections in Kazakhstan failed to meet fundamental principles of democratic elections, João Soares said Monday in delivering the post-election statement of the OSCE election observation mission.

“The country should have allowed more genuine opposition parties to participate in this election,” said Soares, who was appointed by the Irish Chairmanship of the OSCE as special co-ordinator to lead the short-term OSCE observer mission in accordance with the 1997 co-operation agreement between the Parliamentary Assembly and ODIHR.

More than 35 OSCE parliamentarians from 14 countries participated in the mission, which included bilateral meetings and full briefings in Astana and Almaty with government officials and members of unrecognized opposition organizations.

The OSCE statement said the elections were well administered at the technical level and the observers noted legal changes aimed at ensuring representation of at least a second party in parliament, but the authorities did not provide the necessary conditions for the conduct of genuinely pluralistic elections. Several political parties were blocked from standing and a number of candidates were de-registered without due process.

On election day, voting was assessed positively by observers, but the counting process significantly lacked transparency and respect for procedures, with cases of fraud noted.

The legal framework continues to include major



João Soares talks to reporters in Astana, Kazakhstan, while observing elections.

inconsistencies with OSCE commitments, as it disproportionately restricts freedom of assembly, the free flow of information and freedom of association.

There was limited public debate and the media operated in an environment characterized by self-censorship, observers found. The political parties allowed to stand for election could campaign largely without interference from the authorities.

Bureau members Riccardo Migliori (Italy), Wolfgang Grossruck (Austria), Serhiy Shevchuk (Ukraine) and Matteo Mecacci (Italy) participated in the mission with support from the International Secretariat, including Senior Counsellor Semyon Dzakhaev, Communications Director Neil Simon, Programme Director Anna Chernova, and Logistics Officer Iryna Sabashuk.

Secretariat participates in opening of 2012 Irish Chairmanship in Vienna

Representatives of the OSCE PA International Secretariat participated in the opening of the Irish Chairmanship and Heads of Missions meeting in Vienna on 12-13 January.

The Irish Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Eamon Gilmore addressed the OSCE Permanent Council for the first time as OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, stressing the need for the OSCE's co-operative, inclusive approach in tackling modern security challenges.

In presenting Ireland's priorities, the Minister promised to maintain a balanced approach in dealing with challenges in the OSCE's three dimensions of security. Gilmore emphasized the need to focus on arms control, conflict prevention and resolution, and transnational threats in the political and military dimension. He stressed that Ireland will seek to use its own experience from the military conflict in Northern Ireland to help find solutions to the protracted conflicts in the OSCE region.



In the economic and environmental dimension, Ireland will promote good governance particularly focusing on counter corruption instruments, money laundering and terrorist financing.

In addition, the full implementation of the OSCE's human dimension commitments is a top priority, Gilmore said, naming the protection of freedom of expression in the digital age, as well as working with civil society organizations and business to safeguard these freedoms online as specific areas of importance.

Heads of OSCE Field Operations focused on how to implement the Irish Chairmanship's priorities through work in the field. Regional meetings addressed co-ordination with the Irish Chairmanship.

Secretary General Spencer Oliver and Deputy Secretary General Tina Schøn participated in these meetings along with Special Representative Ambassador Andreas Nothelle, Deputy Director for Field Operations Roberto Montella and Deputy Director of Administration Marc Carillet.