

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Observes Algerian Presidential Elections (8 April 2004)

Invited by the Algerian Foreign Minister Mr. Abdelaziz Belkhadem, a special Delegation of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly observed the Presidential Elections held in Algeria on 8 April. The Delegation was led by Mr. Bruce George, President of the Assembly, and formed by Mr. Nevzat Yalcintas (Turkey), Vice-President of the Assembly, and Senator Anne-Marie Lizin, Member of the Belgian Delegation. Mr. Nicolas Kaczorowski, election adviser in the ODIHR, and Mr. Gustavo Pallarés from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly International Secretariat, accompanied the parliamentarians. This was the first time that the Assembly observed an election in an OSCE partner State.

The Delegation had an extensive programme of briefings and meetings in the two days prior to the elections, meeting with leading officials of the Interior Ministry, Central Election Commission, media representatives, as well as with some of the candidates and their representatives. The Delegation also met Foreign Minister Belkhadem and the President of the Algerian National Council (the upper chamber of the Algerian parliament), Mr. Abdelkader Bensalah.

On election day, the delegation visited numerous polling stations in Algiers and surrounding cities, including Tipaza, Tizi-Ouzou, and the Berber region of Kabylia. The Delegation also held consultations with other international observers from the European Parliament, the U.S. Congress, the African Union and the Arab League. In a press conference hours after the closing of polling stations, Bruce George and Anne-Marie Lizin expressed their opinion that the elections had been carried out in a proper and orderly manner. "I know there are criticisms, but in my view this was one of the best conducted elections, not just in Algeria, but in Africa and much of the Arab world," George said.