



## INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION

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#### REPEAT ELECTIONS IN AZERBAIJAN MARK SOME IMPROVEMENT, BUT STILL DO NOT MEET A NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

**Baku, 8 January 2001** – The 7 January repeat parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan marked some improvement compared to the 5 November ballot, but still did not meet a number of international standards for democratic elections, concluded the International Election Observation Mission in Baku.

While the authorities undertook a number of measures to address the significant shortcomings of the 5 November ballot, these measures were insufficient to restore full confidence in the electoral process. Thus the repeat elections took place in an atmosphere of mistrust and were marked by the boycott of several opposition parties. It is regrettable that some of the opposition opted for the boycott of the re-runs. Democracy can only be built through widespread political participation in the democratic institutions.

As a step in the right direction, the authorities reacted promptly to the irregularities observed during the 5 November vote, cancelling the results in 11 constituencies where serious violations had been found, dismissing some officials responsible for the violations, and calling for repeat elections. However, as the repeat elections were limited to single-mandate contests, some 16% of the electorate were disenfranchised for the nationwide proportional ballot. The majority of the complaints relating to the 5 November ballot were not addressed adequately and effectively.

As an improvement over the 5 November election, the Central Election Commission this time showed more flexibility during the candidate registration process and addressed most complaints adequately. However, serious concerns remain in particular with regard to the independence of local election commissions, which again were in some cases subject to interference, pressure and intimidation from the local authorities. The International Election Observation Mission calls for the urgent investigation of all allegations.

On election day, polling took place in a calm and orderly manner, and in contrast to the previous election, observers were generally able to conduct their work unhindered. However, observers again noted a number of irregularities, including some cases of ballot stuffing and a flawed counting and tabulation process. The International Election Observation Mission urges the authorities to display protocols immediately at all commission levels and to publish detailed and aggregated results for each polling station and constituency in order to raise transparency and confidence in the electoral process.

The OSCE/ODIHR, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe stand ready to continue their dialogue with the authorities and civil society of Azerbaijan to address the concerns arising from these elections.

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#### MISSION INFORMATION

The International Election Observation Mission for the repeat parliamentary election in Azerbaijan is a joint effort of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Ms. Paula Kokkonen, Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for the parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan, leads the OSCE observers. Mr. Andreas Gross leads the delegation of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly. Amb. Charles Magee heads the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission in Baku.

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