



May 29, 1995

**PRESS RELEASE****BELARUS SECOND ROUND OF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS  
STILL NOT FREE OR FAIR**

A delegation of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly again found sufficient irregularities in the conduct of the second round of parliamentary elections in Belarus to declare them not to have met international standards for free and fair elections. Led by Mr. Jaroslav Novák, Member of Parliament of the Czech Republic, the delegation found no significant improvement over the violations and inequitable conditions witnessed during the first round of elections. In fact, monitors witnessed a comparatively higher number of voters casting multiple ballots.

The Parliamentary observers also commented that no significant changes had been witnessed between the first and second rounds in the interpretation of the election law regarding the principle of equal opportunity of access to campaign funding and the media. Observers concluded that the Government's continued severe interpretation of the law resulted in highly restricted access to the media and insufficient funding of campaign candidates. OSCE PA delegations to both rounds stated strongly that the overall lack of information about candidates, restrictions on the press, and limitations placed upon candidates and their ability to campaign profoundly reduced political debate in Belarus. This combination of factors, according to the delegations, violated international norms and standards for democratic elections and was one of the main obstacles in the Belarus electorate exercising its right to vote.

While both delegations wished to congratulate Belarus on taking an important and vital step towards democracy by holding its first multi-party elections, the two delegations of Parliamentary observers also stressed the need for:

- greater care being taken in educating voters and local electoral committees on correct procedures for democratic elections, and
- creating a more open environment for the media and candidates to disseminate information about the election.

During the visit to Belarus for the second round of parliamentary elections the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly delegation met with representatives from political parties and with the Chairman of the Central Election Commission. On election day the delegation visited two oblasts in Belarus, the city of Minsk, other cities and towns, rural areas and 14 polling stations, including their opening and closing. The two delegations from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly will shortly issue a detailed joint report on the elections, and then present their findings to the Standing Committee of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly at its meeting on 4 July 1995 in Ottawa, Canada. For further information on the Belarus elections, please contact Mr. Pentti Vaananen, Deputy Secretary General, or Mr. Eric Rudenshiold, Director of Programs, at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly: Raadhustræde 1, 1466-Copenhagen K.; Tel. +45 3332 9400, Fax +45 3332 5505.