

14 April 1997

PRESS RELEASE

ELECTIONS IN CROATIA 13 APRIL 1997

A Delegation of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, led by Guikje Roethof of the Parliament of the Netherlands, monitored elections in Croatia on 13 April 1997. Prior to the election, the Delegation met with the President of the Central Election Commission and representatives of the Croatian Parliament, several political parties, the media and some NGOs concerned with the elections. The Delegation also met with the head of the OSCE Mission to Croatia and representatives of ODIHR. On election day, members of the Delegation visited over 80 polling stations in several parts of Croatia, including Zagreb, Knin, Osijek, Karlovac, Glina and Rijeka as well as rural areas. Prior to election day, some Delegates also visited Eastern Slavonia. Since the elections in Eastern Slavonia are continuing today it would be premature to draw any conclusions concerning the election in that part of Croatia.

The Delegation concludes that Croatian law provides citizens with sufficient opportunities to freely express their will in the electoral process. The Delegation feels, however, that some aspects of the preelection campaign give reason for concern. Much of the media, including the state-owned television and radio, did not cover the campaign in an impartial manner, focusing extensively on the activities of the ruling party. Also, in some cases the authorities failure to enforce rulings of the Constitutional Court was to the advantage of the ruling party.

The election authorities in general appeared to have performed their duties in an efficient and orderly manner. This goes, in particular, for the authorities in polling stations. The delegation takes this opportunity to congratulate them for their contribution to the development of democracy in Croatia. However, the Delegation feels that some aspects of the voting procedures could be improved in the future. It appears that the secrecy of the vote was not completely guaranteed.

In some places, the Delegation noted that political parties were not present to monitor the electoral process. Greater observation would have strengthened the transparency and credibility of the process. Although party observers who were present at polling stations generally performed their duties in a correct and efficient manner, the Delegation also observed some engaging in activities not appropriate for an observer.

The composition of the Delegation is attached. The Delegation will issue its conclusions and recommendations in a detailed report shortly. Further information can be obtained from the International Secretariat in Copenhagen by Deputy Secretary General of the OSCE PA Pentti Vaananen or Ms. Tine Rasmussen.