



PRESS RELEASE

Kyrgyzstan's presidential election was peaceful, but shortcomings underscore need to improve integrity of process

BISHKEK, 31 October 2011 - The presidential election in Kyrgyzstan was conducted in a peaceful manner, but shortcomings underscored that the integrity of the electoral process should be improved to consolidate democratic practice in line with international commitments, international observers concluded in a statement issued today.

The observers noted that candidate registration was inclusive, giving voters a wide choice, and the campaign was open and respected fundamental freedoms. This was overshadowed by significant irregularities on election day, especially during the counting and tabulation of votes. Measures should be taken to improve voter lists, to amend electoral legislation and strengthen the polling process.

“Despite flaws with the voters lists and tabulation processes, we are cautiously optimistic about the future of democracy in Kyrgyzstan. Significant work is still needed at all levels for this country to live up to its commitments to hold democratic elections,” said Walburga Habsburg Douglas, the Special Co-ordinator to lead the short-term OSCE observer mission and Head of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly delegation.

“We believe that this election is crucial for the future of the country and its further co-operation with the European Union. Overall, our delegation positively assessed the voting procedures on election day but we would like to underline the necessity to improve the voter registration system to further increase public confidence in the electoral system,” said Inese Vaidere, the Head of the European Parliament delegation.

“It was important that the people of the Kyrgyz Republic had the opportunity to express their choice in a peaceful and orderly manner. I hope this election will be a step towards breaking the vicious cycle of corruption, lack of implementation of the rule of law and ethnic tensions. We call on all political actors to continue doing their utmost for the stability of the country by protecting the human rights of all its citizens and respecting democratic standards,” said Nursuna Memecan, the Head of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly delegation.

“The election made clear that serious action is needed to ensure the integrity of voting, counting and tabulation. This is crucial for consolidating democratic practice. Full transparency of the Central Election Commission's work would significantly improve confidence in elections,” said Corien Jonker, Head of the Election Observation Mission of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

Election day proceeded in a calm atmosphere without violence and observers overall assessed the voting positively. A considerable number of voters were not on the voter lists and a number of cases of ballot box stuffing, multiple and family voting, vote buying, and bussing of voters were noted. The situation deteriorated during counting and tabulation, with a significant number of polling stations assessed negatively. In a number of cases, protocols were altered or completed by higher-level commissions. Many observers were restricted from following the counts and tabulations.

Campaign advertisements provided voters a wide range of information, but most broadcast media refrained from independent editorial campaign coverage, limiting voters' ability to make an informed choice.

The Central Election Commission's work was adequate but lacked transparency as it held closed-door sessions, at times restricted information, refused to disclose ballot security measures and forbade the observation of ballot printing on security grounds.

The lack of adequate integration policies and slow progress in improving the security situation in national minority areas created a general sense of apprehension and isolation among these communities and limited their involvement in the campaign.

For further information contact:

- Jens-Hagen Eschenbächer, OSCE/ODIHR, +996 779842348 or +48 603 683 122, jens.eschenbaecher@odihr.pl
- Neil Simon, OSCE PA, +996 779842358 or +4560108380, neil@oscepa.dk
- Ivi-Triin Odrats, PACE, +996 779842352 or +33662462979, ivi-triin.odrats@coe.int
- Valerie Ramet, EP, +996 778809166, valerie.ramet@europarl.europa.eu