



PRESS RELEASE

INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION

Moldova elections generally complied with international standards but concerns remain

CHISINAU, 7 March 2005 -The 6 March parliamentary elections in Moldova were generally in compliance with most OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and other international election standards. They did, however, fall short of some key commitments, particularly regarding campaign conditions and media access, the International Election Observation Mission concluded today in a statement.

The Mission, consisting of some 500 observers, was a joint undertaking of the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) and the European Parliament.

"The fact that these elections generally complied with OSCE standards was undercut by negative aspects of unequal campaign conditions and constrained media coverage that were already noted in the 2003 election and have no place in a democracy," said Kimmo Kiljunen, Head of Delegation of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, who was appointed by the OSCE Chairman in Office to lead the short-term observation.

"We regret that Moldova has not lowered its threshold as the Council of Europe recommended already in 2001. This has influenced the result and the balance of the new Moldovan parliament," said Andre Kvakkestad, who headed the PACE Delegation.

Marianne Mikko, Head of the European Parliament Delegation said: "Although there have been a lot of problems during the election campaign, the people of Moldova have shown that they want to be a part of a democratic Europe. It is the clear wish of the European Parliament to build on this desire and assist Moldovans in the future development of their democracy."

"Restrictive regulations on the campaign and media made it difficult for voters to get basic information about the contestants. The OSCE and the Council of Europe have already suggested changes to the election code to address these and other shortcomings. They should be dealt with without delay," said Istvan Gyarmati, Head of the OSCE/ODIHR Mission.

The Observer Mission noted that a competitive and pluralistic party system gave voters a genuine choice. Print media offered diverse political views and the Central Election Commission sought to increase campaign coverage in broadcast media, albeit somewhat belatedly. Over 2,000 domestic observers followed the elections and there was an increased number of women candidates.

Shortcomings included the obstruction of parties' campaign activities, instances of harassment of candidates and opposition media, reports of pressure on public employees not to campaign in support of opposition parties and instances of abuse of public resources. Furthermore, a number of courts failed to respect the legal deadlines to rule on complaints.

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Election day was calm and orderly, with observers making a positive assessment of the polling in 80.4 per cent of the 1,400 polling stations visited. There were some cases of overcrowding and the presence of unauthorized persons during the vote and the count. Observers also noted inconsistency in how rules were applied, for instance regarding supplementary voter lists, stamping of identity documents and control mechanisms during the count.