



PRESS RELEASE

Montenegro elections pluralistic with respect for fundamental rights, although confidence-building is needed, observers say

PODGORICA, 15 October 2012 – Montenegro's early parliamentary elections on 14 October took place in a peaceful and pluralistic environment with respect for fundamental rights, although continued lack of confidence needs to be addressed, international observers said in a statement issued today.

“These elections further consolidated the democratic process. Voters and polling board members have demonstrated a good understanding of their responsibilities,” said Roberto Battelli, the Special Co-ordinator who led the short-term OSCE observer mission and Head of the OSCE PA delegation.

“However, during the election campaign, all participants in the process have a responsibility to focus on democratic substance in order to strengthen trust in the process instead of undermining it.”

“Yesterday the citizens of Montenegro made their choice in a free way from a large number of political parties. The abuse of administrative resources and a lack of transparency in campaign and political party financing are a matter of concern that should be addressed by the authorities,” said Christopher Chope, the Head of the PACE delegation. “Our Assembly will continue its close co-operation, through its monitoring procedures and the Venice Commission, with the Montenegrin parliament and institutions for the further consolidation of democracy.”

Observers noted that electoral contestants were able to campaign freely, and that the candidate-registration process was inclusive and transparent.

Interlocutors alleged the abuse of state resources and reported violations of a public sector recruitment ban during the campaign. There were also concerns over the quality of the voter lists.

Geert-Hinrich Ahrens, the Head of the OSCE/ODIHR limited election observation mission (LEOM), said: “The OSCE/ODIHR limited election observation mission's interlocutors noted that the small number of complaints brought to the attention of the authorities reflected a lack of trust in the complaint system. Often stakeholders informed the LEOM about concerns they had, without seeking legal redress through this system. This situation is not satisfactory and needs to be addressed.”

The State Election Commission operated professionally and transparently, but with a limited interpretation of its role. The right in the amended electoral law to appoint authorized representatives at all levels of the election administration was not fully exercised, with some parties citing limited financial and human resources.

The legal framework is comprehensive and generally provides an adequate basis for the conduct of democratic elections, the statement says, and the introduction of a gender quota for candidate lists represents a marked improvement. The residency requirement continues to

unduly restrict voting rights and was inconsistently applied. Despite amendments to party financing laws, further improvements and better implementation would increase transparency.

The media environment is diverse and divided along political lines. There was extensive television coverage of the elections, and obligations to guarantee equal coverage were respected.

In polling stations observed the election administration conducted the process professionally and transparently. Observers noted that the new status of authorized representatives with voting privileges was often neglected.

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