

ANNEX 1:**PRESS RELEASE****Preliminary Assessment OSCE PA Observers:
Russian Presidential Elections Generally Free and Fair**

June 17, 1996

A Delegation of 62 observers from 29 member countries of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE PA) observed the Russian Presidential elections on June 16. During two days of intensive briefings the Delegation met with seven of ten Presidential candidates and senior representatives of two others. OSCE PA observers also met with the Chairman of the Central Election Commission, Mr. Nikolai Ryabov, and representatives of the Russian mass media. The Delegation observed election-day procedures in more than 100 polling stations throughout the Moscow region, including opening, closing and ballot tabulations. The delegation was led by Mr. Andras Barsony of Hungary, Sir Peter Emery of Great Britain and Mr. Javier Ruperez of Spain. The Delegation included members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The OSCE PA observers sought the opinions of the various candidates, discussed their platforms, and heard their views on the conduct of the elections. Consistent with their experience in the past two Duma elections, the OSCE PA observers were favorably impressed with the manner in which elections were conducted by local officials. The Parliamentary Assembly closely observed procedures at various polling stations within the Moscow region, including several Territorial Commissions as well as the Central Electoral Commission itself.

The Delegation wishes to congratulate the Central Election Commission of Russia for conducting its first multi-candidate Presidential elections. Delegation members took note of the intense political campaign which preceded the election, the open flow of information concerning candidates and their platforms, and the wide variety of choices available to voters on the ballot. The noticeable increase in participation of young voters was regarded as an encouraging sign to Delegation members. During the monitoring process, no major violations were reported to Delegation members by local Russian observers or candidate representatives. The Delegation's preliminary view is that the Russian Presidential elections have been conducted in a generally free and fair manner.

Delegation members did continue to observe scattered instances of minor irregularities, such as family voting and voting outside of polling cabinets. Assembly observers were concerned by criticisms alleging biased coverage in state-owned broadcast media. Assembly observers were also told by opposition candidates that some candidates exceeded campaign spending limits. The Delegation trusts that the Central Election Commission will investigate these issues and, if necessary, take appropriate action to prevent them from occurring in the future.

The holding of this election within the Constitutional time frame was regarded by Delegation members as a sign of Russia's deepening commitment to democracy. Delegation members sincerely hope that the results of these democratic elections will help bring about

political and economic stability in Russia. Delegation members encourage all Russian citizens to participate in the second round of elections in a peaceful and democratic manner.

For future information you may contact OSCE PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver or Deputy Secretary General Vitaly Evseyev at the International Secretariat in Copenhagen, Denmark (telephone +45 3332 9400, fax +45 3332 5505). A full report will be made to the Standing Committee of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly at its Annual Assembly in Stockholm, Sweden on July 5, 1996.