

## **Serbia's elections open and highly competitive, additional transparency needed**

BELGRADE, 7 May 2012 – Serbia's parliamentary and early presidential elections on 6 May 2012 took place in an open and competitive environment but additional efforts are needed to improve the transparency of the election process and the functioning of the media, observers said in a statement issued today.

Observers noted that voters were provided with a wide degree of choice between various political options and contestants were able to campaign freely. Most electoral stakeholders expressed a high degree of confidence in the professionalism of the election administration. On election day, commissions carried out their duties professionally. Certain procedural problems were noted but no serious incidents took place.

Media ownership lacks transparency and there is a need to have more balanced and analytical coverage.

The introduction of a single unified voter register was a positive step but its implementation started late and there appeared to be some lack of transparency in the compilation of the register.

“These were open and competitive elections, thanks to the legal reforms implemented over the last few years. I'm glad to say that the citizens of Serbia are moving forward on their path to building a fully-fledged democracy to face the challenges ahead,” said Matteo Mecacci, the Special Co-ordinator who led the short-term OSCE observer mission.

“The elections in Serbia addressed most of the Council of Europe standards for democratic elections. The citizens made their choice freely among a large number of parties and presidential candidates. Nevertheless, the media coverage could have been more balanced. Regarding the transparency of campaign financing, the PACE delegation looks forward to the report of the Anti-Corruption Agency on this issue,” said Jean-Charles Gardetto, the Head of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) delegation.

“It welcomes the efforts of the international community and those of Belgrade and Prishtina which allowed the Serbian citizens of Kosovo<sup>1</sup> to exercise their right to vote,” he added.

Corien Jonker, the Head of the OSCE/ODIHR Limited Election Observation Mission, said: “We were happy that the elections took place in a calm environment. We are also pleased to see that there is high confidence in the electoral process. At the same time, it is clear from our long-term observation that greater transparency is vital to maintain and further develop this confidence, which is necessary for a vibrant democracy. Here the role of citizens is key: they should insist upon greater openness from their institutions.”

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<sup>1</sup> All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

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