



PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

27 May 1996

OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

Press release

Parliamentary election in Albania 26 May 1996

A Delegation of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly monitored the election in Albania on 26 May 1996. The Delegation was led by Mr. Raoul Üksvärav (Estonia) and consisted of Toomas Alatalu, (Estonia), Urban Ahlin (Sweden), Algan Hacaloglu (Turkey), Jan Krycer (Czech Republic), Fiorello Provera (Italy), Hans Raidel (Germany) and Jef Tavernier (Belgium). The Delegation was accompanied by Pentti Väänänen, Deputy Secretary General of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly as well as by Bob Hand and Janice Helwig, advisors to the US Delegation to the Assembly.

On 24 and 25 the Delegation met with representatives of the Albanian Government, Central Electoral Commission, major political parties, the media and the Ambassador of Switzerland.

The Delegation acknowledges that Albania has only in a few years time made significant progress from a closed dictatorship to a democracy. The Delegation hopes that these elections would contribute to further consolidation of this process.

The Delegation discussed several issues concerning the legal basis of the elections. In this connection the Delegation also discussed the *Law on Genocide* and considers that the law includes procedures which are not entirely transparent. It also includes stipulations which limit the electorate's possibilities to choose freely their candidates.

The Delegation feels that the state owned media and some authorities were not entirely unbiased. The legal provisions for presenting the parties favoured the ruling party. The Delegation acknowledges that the media performed well its duty to inform the voters about the electoral procedures.

The Delegation also feels that the Albanian legislation does provide a basis for free and fair election and for the will of the people to be expressed.

On the polling day members of the Delegation visited more than 50 polling stations in different parts of Albania, including Tirana, Durres, Shkoder, Fier, Elbasan, Leche, Burrel, Pogradec, Lushnje and Korçe. They also visited several rural areas.

The Delegation feels that the officials at polling stations, in general, performed their duties in an orderly manner and in accordance with the law. The Delegation did, however, observe a

number of irregularities and technical shortcomings which will be dealt in details in the final report.

Members of the Delegation observed the counting of votes in several polling stations in Tirana. The withdrawal of opposition representatives from the polling stations contributed to the lack of confidence in the integrity of the counting process.

The Delegation appeals to the Albanian authorities and to all political parties to make their utmost to secure that the second round of the election can take place in a normal and peaceful atmosphere where the electorate can freely express their opinions. A successful second round would be essential for the further consolidation of democracy and stability in Albania. The Delegation emphasizes that the Government and all political parties alike share the responsibility in this vital matter.

The Delegation will issue its final report in a few weeks.

Further information can be obtained from Mr. Pentti Väänänen, Deputy secretary General, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly; Rådhusstræde 1, Copenhagen.
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