

## PRESS RELEASE

### PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN CROATIA

A Delegation of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly monitored Elections in Croatia on 29 October 1995 at the invitation of the Croatian Parliament. The Delegation concludes that Croatian law provides the citizens with sufficient conditions for free and fair elections. Citizens have adequate opportunity to participate in the political process.

However, the Delegation feels that the manner in which the Croatians living abroad participate in the elections and their representation in the new Parliament are both reasons for concern. The Delegation also feels that in the absence of a census adequate representation for national minorities, including the Serbian minority, may not be achieved.

In addition, the Delegation feels that the state owned media did not cover the campaign in an impartial manner. Although the Constitutional Court appeared to rule fairly on complaints in such matters, these rulings were not always enforced, or were delayed.

Election authorities, in particular the officials in the polling stations, appeared to perform their duties in an efficient and orderly manner. The Delegation feels, however, that the secrecy of the vote was not consistently guaranteed. In addition, the fact that the ballot for the Serbian candidates was separate, and voters had to choose in the presence of others, both raise concern about voter anonymity.

It would have been desirable for a larger representation of political parties at all levels of the electoral process, including the composition of voting boards and monitoring activities.

On 27 and 28 October the Delegation met with representatives of the Croatian Parliament, the Government, Constitutional Court, Central Election Commission, eight political parties or coalitions, national minorities and the media. The Delegation also met with representatives of the UNHCR, UNPF, ODIHR and the EU. On 29 October members of the Delegation visited more than 100 polling stations in several parts of Croatia, including Zagreb, Split, Knin, Osijek, Rijeka, Sisak and Petrinje. They also visited seven polling stations in Bosnian cities, including Mostar.

The Delegation, led by Mr. Are Naess, Member of the Norwegian Parliament, included 14 parliamentarians from eight countries: Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Norway and Slovenia.

The Delegation is aware that the war in the former Yugoslavia, including Croatia, affected the political environment of the elections. With this in mind, the Delegation wishes every success to the newly elected Parliament and the Croatian Government in promoting peace in the region in order to create normal conditions for the consolidation of parliamentary democracy.

The Delegation will issue its conclusions and recommendations in a detailed report shortly.

Further information can be obtained from the International Secretariat in Copenhagen by contacting Deputy Secretary General of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Pentti Väänänen, Ms. Susanne Schoedel, or Mr. Chris Sharman.