



Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

Press Release 6-11-95

Parliamentary Elections in Georgia

A delegation of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly observed the parliamentary and presidential elections in Georgia on 5 November 1995, at the invitation of the Parliament of the Republic of Georgia. The delegation was led by Erik Solheim, Member of the Parliament of Norway, and included seven parliamentarians from five countries and two members of the International Secretariat. Countries represented in the delegation include: the Czech Republic, Germany, Moldova, Norway and Sweden.

During their visit to Georgia, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly delegation met with representatives from: registered political parties, candidates for office, Members of the outgoing Georgian Parliament, the Chairman of the Central Electoral Commission, representatives of the government, the Speaker of the Georgian Parliament, the Chairman of the Supreme Court, representatives of the "Fair Elections" domestic observer organization, persons boycotting the elections, representatives of the mass media, and representatives of local and international non-governmental organizations.

On election day, members of the Delegation visited many regions of Georgia, including parts of Southern Ossetia and Kakhetia; the city of Tbilisi, numerous other cities and towns; rural areas; and more than 50 polling stations, including their opening and closings.

The delegation congratulates the Republic of Georgia for holding multi-party and multi-candidate elections and recognizes this effort as an important and vital step towards democratic development. The government is to be commended for allowing large numbers of domestic monitors to be an integral part of the election process. Inviting international election observers is also an important step in opening up the electoral process.

During its series of meetings with political parties and individuals in Georgia, and on the day of elections, few specific complaints or violations were brought to the attention of our group. Of the concerns that were brought to our attention, particularly those concerning voting procedures, almost none were witnessed. Although a final vote count cannot be determined for a number of days, and not all regions of Georgia were visited, the delegation considers that the elections were generally well run on election day, and were not seriously marred by other pre-election conditions. There were, however, some issues which the delegation wished to address for future elections:

1) Level Playing Field--

The arrest and detention of some opposition members, while not entirely silencing that point of view, did reduce opposition voices in the pre-election period. However, generally those who chose not to participate in the elections did so, as far as could be determined by the delegation, of their own free will and were not systematically excluded from the process.

2) Election Law and Implementation--

Promises of state financing for political campaigns was unrealistic and created false expectations among parties and candidates.

3) Voter Information, Media Access & Coverage--

A significant number of complaints were heard regarding excessive news coverage of the Head of State to suggest that an inequitable situation existed. Other presidential and parliamentary candidates were inhibited by an interpretation of the electoral law from receiving almost any news coverage.

However, the delegation wishes to note that although some procedural and technical violations were witnessed in polling stations, proper procedures were observed to be more the rule than the exception. Adherence to the one-man one-vote principle was generally observed, as was the sanctity of the secret ballot. The delegation also wishes to emphasize that a multiple number of parties and points of view were represented in the election, and there appeared to be a definite choice between candidates. In addition, the delegation strongly encourages the citizenry of Georgia to participate in the second round of voting that will undoubtedly be necessary to seat the new parliament.

The final report of the delegation will be presented to the Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Stockholm, Sweden, scheduled for July 2-6, 1996. Further information can be obtained from Mr. Eric Rudenshiold, Program Director of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly: Raadhusstraede 1, 1466-Copenhagen K, Tel +45 3332 9400, Fax +45 3332 5505