

PRESS RELEASE

"1995 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN KAZAKSTAN"

A delegation of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly observed the widespread practice of voters collecting and casting multiple ballots per person during the parliamentary elections for the lower house (majilis) in Kazakstan on December 9. Observers noted the process of signing for, and voting more than one ballot per individual, to be prevalent in the majority of polling stations.

The delegation notes that there are strong cultural traditions related to the practice of proxy or "family" voting in Kazakstan. However, a number of high-level officials from the Government, including the Chairmen of the Supreme Court and the Central Election Commission, assured international observers that the one-man one-vote principle would be adhered to in these elections. In fact, special provisions were written into the current electoral law to clarify prior legislation and to prohibit the proxy voting practice. The previous parliamentary elections in 1994 were criticized by observers from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly delegation for widespread violations of the one-man one-vote principle.

Furthermore, on elections day the delegation encountered a general lack of information among voters regarding candidates. When asked before casting their ballots, most voters were unable to recall the name of even one candidate running in their district. In a related vein, the electoral campaign was regarded by the delegation members to be exceptionally quiet, with little debate or information. Given this situation, the delegation believes it was difficult for the electorate to make an informed decision.

In addition, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly delegation members observed a lack of standardized procedures between polling stations relating to: the determination of the validity of ballots, vote counts, etc.

However, delegation members also wish to recognize the adoption of a number of observer recommendations from the 1994 elections which are believed to have somewhat improved the overall electoral process. Specifically, the simplification of the candidate registration process, the increased ability for opposition views to be broadcast in the press, more opportunities for candidates to obtain funds for their campaigns (along with established accounting criteria), and the inclusion of independent domestic observer groups. The delegation congratulates the Government of Kazakstan for holding multi-party elections and recognizes this effort as a vital step towards democratic development. The Government and Central Election Commission are also to be commended for inviting international observers in an effort to open up the electoral process. Delegation members strongly encourage the citizenry of Kazakstan to participate in any subsequent rounds of voting that may be necessary to seat the new Parliament.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly delegation monitored the parliamentary elections in Kazakstan for the Senate on 5 December and for the lower house (majilis) on 9 December at the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakstan. The Delegation included two parliamentarians from two countries (the Czech Republic and France) and two members from the International Secretariat.



During their visit to Kazakstan, the delegation met with representatives from registered and unregistered political parties, the mass media, the Chairman of the Central Electoral Commission, the President and Vice President of Kazakstan, the Chairman of the Supreme Court, the Ministers of Justice and Foreign Affairs, members of national minority groups and the intelligentsia, domestic monitoring groups, former parliamentarians and non-governmental organizations. On elections day, members of the delegation visited more than 100 polling stations in the Almaty region, including their opening and closings.

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 Eric Rudenshiold, Program Director of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly: Radhusstraede 1, 1466 - Copenhagen K, Tel +45 3332 9400, Fax. +45 3332 5505.

ELECTIONS TO THE SENATE IN KAZAKSTAN
5 December 1995

The Delegation of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to the elections in Kazakstan on 5 December attended the proceedings for selection of the new Senate by indirect suffrage. Forty Senators were elected by members of local councils (*maslikhats*) from a field of 48 candidates. Delegation members witnessed the elections for the two Senators from the capital city of Almaty, along with other international and domestic observers and members of the press.

Tremendous efforts have so far been made by local, regional and national officials to open up the electoral process to all observers. Though no provision in the election law was made for the sanctioning of non-affiliated domestic observers, the Central Election Commission has recently extended permission for independent observers to participate in electoral processes as well.

Political campaigning has so far been comparatively quiet, but this does not appear to be the result of any governmental interference. The OSCE Parliamentary Delegation is continuing its series of meetings with political leaders, and will today meet with President Nursultan Nazarbaev. Also scheduled are meetings with domestic observer groups, opposition party representatives, and former parliamentarians. Direct, popular elections for the 67-seat lower house (*majilis*) will take place on Saturday, 9 December.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Delegation is composed of Members of Parliament from the Czech Republic and France, along with staff from the International Secretariat.

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