



ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE
Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

PRESS RELEASE

Kazakh elections: progress and problems

ASTANA, 19 August 2007 - While the 2007 parliamentary elections in Kazakhstan reflected welcome progress, a number of international standards were not met, in particular with regard to elements of the new legal framework and the vote count, concluded the International Election Observation Mission deployed to monitor the 18 August elections.

Voting was conducted in a calm atmosphere and was assessed positively by observers. However the vote count was assessed negatively in over 40 per cent of polling stations visited, mainly due to procedural problems and lack of transparency.

"Notwithstanding the concerns contained in the report, I believe that these elections continue to move Kazakhstan forward in its evolution towards a democratic country," said Senator Consiglio Di Nino, Special Co-Ordinator of the OSCE short-term observers and Head of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly delegation.

David Wilshire, the Head of the delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, said: "Building a democracy is a long and hard task. However, the people of Kazakhstan are making real progress. I am not surprised that more needs to be done but saddened that the outstanding challenges include some fundamental matters."

Ambassador Lubomir Kopaj, who heads the long-term election observation mission of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), stressed that the election legislation reform, which was interrupted by the early elections, needs to be resumed as soon as possible. "The authorities have demonstrated a willingness to improve the election process, but our observations show that Kazakhstan still needs to make many improvements."

In the pre-election period, candidates enjoyed increased ability to convey their messages to voters. Candidate list registration was inclusive. The Central Election Commission worked transparently and adopted numerous decisions to regulate the election process and conducted extensive voter education. Observers enjoyed good co-operation with the authorities.

However, a combination of restrictive legal provisions stands in the way of developing a pluralistic political party system and decreases accountability of elected representatives to voters. Those include a high threshold for representation in the parliament, provisions that parties choose only after the elections which candidates become members of parliament and undue limitations on the right to seek public office.

Furthermore, nine of the 107 seats in the lower house of parliament are not contested by popular vote, but appointed, and the governing Nur Otan party received favourable treatment by authorities and State media.

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