



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

PRESS RELEASE

Kyrgyz election marks tangible progress

BISHKEK, 11 July 2005 - The 10 July Kyrgyz presidential election marked tangible progress towards meeting OSCE and other international commitments for democratic elections, although the vote count proved to be problematic. Fundamental civil and political rights were generally respected and there was an improved media environment, concluded the International Election Observation Mission in its preliminary findings and conclusions, published today.

The Mission is a joint undertaking of the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament. It consisted of some 340 observers from 45 countries, which is the highest number of countries participating in an election observation on behalf of these organizations.

"I am pleased to note the increased political will to hold a democratic election this time around. The election marked a clear progress, although the quality of the process deteriorated during the count," said Kimmo Kiljunen, Head of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly delegation and appointed by the OSCE Chairman in Office as the Special Co-ordinator of the short-term observers.

Albert Jan Maat, Head of the European Parliament delegation, said: "This election was a step forward, even though it was not without flaws. Election day was a sign of this. Now the European Union faces the challenge of supporting further strengthening of democracy in Kyrgyzstan."

Observers visited nearly 1,300 polling stations. Generally the election day was peaceful, although polling station committees did not follow procedures entirely. Of particular concern were a small number of serious irregularities observed, including apparently deliberate fraud such as ballot stuffing and some implausible increases in turnout figures. The process deteriorated during the counting and results tabulation. Violations included failure to announce voters' choice out loud, tampering with results protocols or delivering incomplete or blank protocols to the district election commissions.

Ambassador Lubomir Kopaj, who heads the OSCE/ODIHR long-term mission, stressed the need for further improvement to the Kyrgyz election code and its implementation. "I urge the authorities not to lose momentum, now that we have seen what can be achieved in such a short timeframe."

During the election campaign, there were almost no apparent obstacles to campaigning, except the available resources of candidates themselves. Freedom of assembly and of expression were respected throughout the election process. Abuse of administrative resources was largely absent, after strong warnings were announced by politicians and the administration.

Some of the legal hurdles during the campaign included the requirement for 50 per cent turnout, 50,000 signatures for candidacy, and a language test for candidates. The Central Election Commission was not always consistent in its approach toward different candidates and it did not meet all its deadlines. Intensive efforts were made to revise the voter lists, but these attempts were in some cases in breach of the law. This included the removal of persons residing abroad with the apparent objective to increase percentage turnout by decreasing the number of registered voters.

Full version including photos, links and attachments: <http://www.osce.org/item/15624.html>