
INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION Parliamentary Election, Republic of Moldova – 5 April 2009

STATEMENT OF PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Chişinău, 6 April 2009 – The International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) for the 5 April parliamentary elections in the Republic of Moldova is a joint undertaking of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), and the European Parliament (EP).

The elections are assessed for their compliance with the OSCE and Council of Europe commitments for democratic elections, as well as with Moldovan legislation. This statement of preliminary findings and conclusions is delivered prior to the completion of the election process. The final assessment of the elections will depend, in part, on the conduct of the remaining stages of the election process, including the tabulation and announcement of results, and the handling of possible post-election day complaints or appeals. The OSCE/ODIHR will issue a comprehensive final report, including recommendations for potential improvements, some eight weeks after the completion of the election process. The delegation of the PACE will present its report at the April 2009 part of the plenary session of the Assembly in Strasbourg.

The institutions represented in the IEOM wish to thank the Moldovan authorities for their cooperation and stand ready to continue their support for the conduct of democratic elections.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

The 5 April 2009 parliamentary elections took place in an overall pluralistic environment, offering voters distinct political alternatives and meeting many of the OSCE and Council of Europe commitments. Further improvements are required to ensure an electoral process free from undue administrative interference and to increase public confidence.

Voting on election day was well-organized and took place in a calm and peaceful atmosphere, without any major incidents reported. Observers noted good knowledge of electoral procedures both by election commission members and most voters. Counting was also assessed positively, but a number of significant procedural shortcomings were noted. Processing of results by District Electoral Councils requires further improvement.

The media provided contestants with opportunities to convey messages to the electorate, in particular through debates and paid airtime, and therefore allowed voters to make a more informed choice. However, the public broadcaster *Moldova 1* in its news offered preferential treatment of the authorities, blurring the distinction between the coverage of duties of top State officials and their campaign activities.

The IEOM noted the following additional positive aspects of the electoral process:

- Party lists and candidates were registered in an inclusive process;
- The Central Election Commission (CEC) operated in an overall professional and transparent manner;
- Electoral contestants were able to benefit from an improved framework for campaign rallies provided by the new Law on Public Assemblies;

- The process of adjudication of complaints and appeals by electoral bodies and courts ensured that electoral challenges were generally considered in a timely manner and with respect for principles of due process.

However, the following shortcomings remain to be addressed:

- The campaign environment was affected by frequent allegations of intimidation, including by the police, of voters and candidates, and allegations of misuse of administrative resources. Some of these allegations were verified;
- Voter registration lacked uniformity and an adequate legal framework. Compilation of voter lists varied considerably among local government units, particularly with regard to the inclusion of voters residing abroad;
- The Audiovisual Co-ordination Council failed to act in a timely manner to address problems related to the media coverage of the campaign;
- The CEC Regulation on Media Coverage of the campaign included restrictions that were not in line with the principle of freedom of expression and access to information guaranteed by the Constitution.

The Election Code generally provided an adequate basis for the conduct of democratic elections. Nonetheless, the combination of the electoral threshold, prohibition of pre-electoral alliances and the restriction of electoral rights of persons with multiple citizenship created obstacles for many political parties and candidates. In addition, the voter turnout requirement for an election to be valid allows for cycles of failed elections.

As in previous elections, voting did not take place on the territory that is, since 1992, under the *de facto* control of the Transdniestrian authorities. Voters residing in Transdniestria could vote at 10 special polling stations. In Corjova, a disputed commune on the eastern bank, voting was aggressively prevented during the day by a seemingly organized crowd.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Background

The 5 April parliamentary elections were conducted to elect 101 members of the unicameral parliament of the Republic of Moldova for a four-year term. These elections were seen as particularly significant as the newly elected parliament will elect a new President of Moldova. Following the completion of two terms, the incumbent President Vladimir Voronin, Chairman of the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM), can not stand for re-election.

The outgoing legislature comprised four political party factions, including the PCRM with 55 seats, the Alliance “Our Moldova” (AMN) - 14 seats, the Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM) - 11 seats and the Christian Democratic People’s Party (PPCD) - 7 seats. The remaining 14 members of parliament were not affiliated with any of these factions.

The PCRM has enjoyed an absolute majority in the legislature since 2001. After 2005 parliamentary elections, the PCRM mustered the support of several parties, including PDM and PPCD, for the re-election of Mr. Vladimir Voronin as President on 4 April 2005.

Legal Framework

The 1994 Constitution (last amended in 2006) and the 1997 Electoral Code (last amended in April 2008) constitute key legislation regulating the conduct of elections. The relevant legal framework also includes the 2007 Law on Political Parties, the 2008 Law on Public Assemblies, organic laws on the courts, as well as regulations and decisions issued by the CEC.

The latest Joint Opinion of the OSCE/ODIHR and the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe concluded that while the Election Code continued to provide an adequate basis for the conduct of democratic elections, the 2008 amendments have addressed past recommendations to a limited extent.¹ Key amendments, which raised concerns among the opposition political parties, included the increase of the electoral threshold for party representation in the parliament, the prohibition on forming pre-electoral coalitions and the limitation of the rights of persons with multiple citizenship to become members of parliament. These provisions, combined together, create obstacles for many political parties and candidates, including persons belonging to national minorities.

Election System

Members of the parliament of the Republic of Moldova are elected within a single nationwide constituency through proportional representation based on closed party lists. The electoral threshold is six per cent of the valid votes cast for political parties and three per cent for independent candidates.

Elections are considered valid if at least half of registered voters participate. In case this turnout requirement is not met, a repeat voting is conducted in 14 days on the basis of the same candidate and voter lists, requiring a lower turnout of at least one-third of the electorate. If the repeat election fails to meet the lowered turnout requirement, new elections are to be called. The OSCE/ODIHR and the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe repeatedly recommended the removal of the turnout requirement as these provisions allow for cycles of failed elections.

Election Administration

The 2009 parliamentary elections were administered by a three-tiered election administration comprising the CEC, 35 District Electoral Councils (DECs) and 1,977 Precinct Electoral Bureaus (PEBs). Election administration bodies may not include members of political parties or local councils. Election contenders were entitled to appoint one non-voting representative to each level of election administration.

The CEC is a permanent nine-person body appointed for a five-year term. The law provides for one of its members to be appointed by the President and one by the government. The remaining seven commissioners are nominated by the parliamentary political parties in proportion to the number of seats held. Presently, the PPCD is represented by one member and the PCRM, AMN and PDM by two members each.

All 35 DECs that were established for these elections had 11 members - two appointed by district courts and the remaining nine nominated by political parties proportionally to their

¹ OSCE/ODIHR and Venice Commission of the Council of Europe Joint Opinion on the Election Code of Moldova as of 23 October 2008 (CDL-AD(2008)022), p.5.

representation in parliament. PEBs were appointed by DECAs and had either seven, nine or eleven members, depending on the number of voters per polling station; three of them were appointed by local councils and the remaining ones nominated by parliamentary parties.

The CEC operated in an overall transparent and professional manner, although on occasion concerns were expressed with regard to its impartiality in adjudication of complaints. The CEC held meetings twice a week. CEC meetings, including the agenda, were announced on the CEC website. The meetings were well organized and open to the public, domestic media and observers. Decisions were announced by press release and published on the website, mostly within 24 hours.

The CEC passed a number of important decisions, including on stamping of the voters' IDs as a measure against possible multiple voting and enfranchisement of voters without registered residence or with expired IDs.

Some provisions of the Election Code were not implemented at all or were treated by the election administration as "optional". Occasional omissions of electoral deadlines have occurred and the accountability in the process of printing of ballots and distribution of Absentee Vote Certificates (AVCs) from DECAs to PEBs was not adequately ensured. Despite legal requirements, the majority of polling stations visited during the pre-election period failed to open 20 days before the election, and in half of polling stations visited, the voter list was not displayed.

In its 20 March decision, the CEC granted the voters residing in the Transdniestrian region an opportunity to vote in 10 special polling stations. In Corjova, a disputed commune on the eastern bank of the Nistru/Dniestr, voting was aggressively prevented during the day by a seemingly organized crowd.

Voter Registration

The responsibility for the compilation of voter lists is vested with local executive authorities. The Election Code provides that the CEC co-operates with the Ministry of Information Development (MID) in establishing the number of registered voters. The MID provided the CEC with an extract from the state population register it administers, and this data was then passed on to local authorities to assist them in voter list (VL) compilation. On 17 March, based on locally-compiled VLs, the CEC announced that there were 2,549,804 registered voters, an increase of some 10 per cent compared to the last parliamentary elections.

Comparison of data on the voting age population provided by the MID with the number of registered voters provided by local executive authorities revealed a discrepancy of some 160,000. This discrepancy raised concerns of some stakeholders with regard to possible errors and multiple records.

The OSCE/ODIHR observers noted that the methods of compilation of VLs varied considerably among local government units, which led to controversies between the CEC and some local authorities, particularly with regard to the inclusion of voters abroad. On 23 March, the CEC issued a clarification that voters residing abroad were to be included into the regular VLs in Moldova. This was contested in some localities, e.g. in Hincesti and Gagauzia.

With a considerable number of Moldovan citizens temporarily residing abroad, a controversy had developed over requests by some political parties and individuals to open additional polling stations abroad. According to the Election Code, voters residing abroad can only vote in diplomatic and consular offices of the Republic of Moldova. For these elections, 22,064 voters were registered to vote in 33 polling stations abroad. However, following a decision of the CEC to allow all voters abroad to vote, including with expired passports, 63,091 ballots were printed for out-of-country voting. This decision contradicted the provision in the Election Code which requires that the number of ballots printed for voting abroad should not exceed the number of registered voters by more than 5 per cent.

In addition to the regular VL, supplementary VLs were drawn by election commissions on election day to include voters without registered residence, voters with AVCs, voters with registered residence on the territory of a respective precinct, but not included on the regular VL, as well as voters from Transdnistria voting at specially-assigned polling stations. Separate supplementary VLs were also drawn to include homebound voters using a mobile ballot box.

Campaign Environment

While the campaign environment was generally pluralistic, there were frequent allegations of candidate and voter intimidation and police involvement, some of which were verified. Months prior to the elections, criminal and tax investigations were launched against a number of opposition leaders and party activists. Candidates involved complained that their campaigning was affected by fear of possible repercussions.

According to the data provided by the CEC, 1,183 candidates on 12 party lists, as well as five independent candidates², were registered in an inclusive process. Of these, 208 candidates were reported as holding more than one citizenship, and if elected, would have to initiate proceedings to renounce their other citizenship(s) in order to take up their seats in parliament.

The governing PCRM emphasized their views about economic achievements of the past eight years, the need for stability and the international standing of the President, who engaged in increased foreign policy activities throughout the campaign. Most opposition parties criticized the PCRM for widespread corruption and mismanagement, and campaigned on an anti-communist rhetoric. Negative campaigning, in particular against key opposition figures, became more frequent in the run-up to election day.

Following a low-key start, the campaign gained momentum after the completion of candidate registration on 10 March. Outside the capital Chisinau, electoral contestants primarily campaigned by door-to-door canvassing and display of campaign billboards and posters. Major electoral events took place mostly in Chisinau.

The OSCE/ODIHR EOM received numerous reports from election contestants relating to the removal, destruction and staining of electoral posters and billboards, and verified such instances in Chisinau, Vulcanesti and Balti. In Orhei, offices of some opposition parties were vandalized during the night of 16 to 17 March.

² Initially, 15 party lists and 6 independent candidates were registered. Subsequently, three political parties and one independent candidate withdrew from the race.

OSCE/ODIHR EOM also noted instances of interference with opposition party meetings and rallies. On 13 March in Chisinau, at a protest youth rally of the AMN in front of the Ministry of Interior, unidentified persons threw bottles with paint into the group of participants. Some rallies of opposition parties were disturbed by seemingly organized groups shouting insults at participants and candidates as observed in Orhei region and the city of Balti.

In the course of the pre-electoral period, the OSCE/ODIHR EOM has been receiving reports from opposition parties alleging various forms of police involvement in the campaign. Parties complained about the obstruction and intimidation by police of voters willing to attend their rallies. The Liberal Democratic Party (PLDM) complained that in some cities the police stopped busses with party supporters planning to attend a rally in Chisinau on 22 March. The OSCE/ODIHR EOM confirmed such instances in Orhei and Balti.

The OSCE/ODIHR EOM was also informed of an arrest, court case and an eventual expulsion of two foreign consultants of the PLDM on questionable charges. In another instance, the OSCE/ODIHR EOM confirmed a case of a senior police official in Briceni having been removed from office due to his refusal to contribute to the work allegedly carried out by the police in favour of the PCRM. In another case, on 25 February, the Nisporeni-based *Albasat* TV was subject to a police search and a subsequent criminal case against the channel for alleged violation of an employment contract that took place in 2006.

The OSCE/ODIHR EOM received credible reports from candidates, party activists or their families, including from Edinet and Briceni, about pressure by employers to cease either candidacy or participation in the campaign or otherwise face job dismissal. Opposition parties also informed the OSCE/ODIHR EOM about pressure on public employees and students to attend meetings of the PCRM and to abstain from attending opposition rallies. Such reports were received from a number of locations and were verified by OSCE/ODIHR EOM observers in Briceni and Ialoveni. The shortcomings observed during the campaign are not in line with Paragraph 7.7 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document requiring that campaign atmosphere is free from administrative interference and intimidation.

Electoral contestants benefited from the provisions of the new Law on Public Assemblies, which replaced the requirement to obtain an authorisation for outdoor meetings from local authorities with a notification by the organisers. In a few cases, however, election contenders and local authorities appeared to believe that an authorization continues to be required. Some political parties reported occasional difficulties in accessing publicly owned meeting halls.

In a regrettable development, a PLDM candidate attacked a TV crew of an information agency *Omega* at the 22 March rally in Chisinau. The party leadership apologised and removed the candidate in question from its list. The media reported that the individual in question was subsequently arrested.

Media

Television is the most influential source of information in Moldova. Two channels, the public service broadcaster *Moldova 1* and *NIT*, have nationwide coverage. Newspapers have a limited impact due to relatively low circulation. Private *Pro TV*, perceived as one of the few sources willing to offer diverse political viewpoints, faced problems in December 2008 with the extension of its license. Following concerns expressed by the diplomatic

community, the *Pro TV* was able to continue broadcasting and a tender for new licences was postponed until after the elections.

The legal framework for media coverage of the campaign is provided by the Election Code, the Broadcasting Code and the CEC Regulation on the Media Coverage.³ Some aspects of this Regulation raised concerns as they included restrictions that were not in line with the principle of freedom of expression and access to information guaranteed by Articles 32 and 34 of the Constitution.⁴

In its prime-time news, the publicly-funded *Moldova 1* and *Radio Moldova* provided some coverage to a broad range of electoral contestants, however limited in time⁵. The PCRM received the most positive coverage, while AMN and PLDM were predominantly presented in a neutral or negative tone. At the same time, in its newscasts⁶, *Moldova 1* provided extensive reporting⁷ on the official activities of the President and the government. As the President and the majority of ministers were candidates at the top of the PCRM list⁸, the public broadcaster blurred the distinction between the coverage of official duties of top State officials and their campaign activities.⁹ This was not consistent with paragraph 5.4 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document.

Among private broadcasters, the editorial policy of *NIT* and *N4* was similar to that of *Moldova 1*, with extensive and favourable coverage of State authorities. At the same time, both channels presented AMN, PL and PLDM in a predominantly negative tone. *EU TV* also generally provided favourable news reporting on State authorities, but predominantly favoured the PPCD. *Pro TV* and *TV7* were the only channels providing a more balanced coverage of the campaign, including critical reporting on the authorities. However, their potential audience was limited compared to that of *Moldova 1* and *NIT*.

Beyond the news, the media generally adhered to the legal requirement to provide equitable access of electoral contestants to the media. Regular televised debates organized by a number of national and local media provided opportunities for contestants to inform voters of their platforms. However, the fact that the PCRM decided not to participate in most debates, except those organized by the public TV and radio, may have reduced the informational value of these debates for the viewers.

Paid advertising was used extensively by approximately half of contestants, with some portion of negative campaigning used mostly by PCRM against electoral opponents. Some contestants complained about high costs set by *Moldova 1* for paid campaign spots – 450 euro per minute – the highest among operating broadcasters.

³ The Regulation on the Coverage of Electoral Campaign by Mass Media was adopted by the CEC on 2 February.

⁴ The Regulation prohibited to “use video and audio materials containing historical personalities of Moldova or of other countries, as well as the symbols of foreign states, international bodies and the image of foreign officials” in campaign spots.

⁵ All electoral contestants together received 38 per cent (more than 165 minutes) of subject-related news coverage.

⁶ Calculated as a share of the total time given to all monitored subjects, which include all electoral contestants, President, Government, including ministers, Speaker of Parliament, and all levels of election commissions.

⁷ 42 per cent (equal to some 180 minutes).

⁸ Mr. Voronin received 90 per cent of coverage as a President, amounting to some 90 minutes.

⁹ Article 47(4) of the Election Code stipulates that “no electoral candidate shall be entitled to privileges due to the offices they hold”.

A large number of media related complaints were received and considered by the CEC and the Audiovisual Co-ordination Council (CCA). The CCA, the only body with competence to sanction broadcast media to ensure their compliance with the law, failed to act on observed imbalance in media coverage in a timely manner. The 24 March decision by CCA to warn seven broadcasters, including *Moldova 1*, for not respecting the principle of pluralism in their broadcasting was not published before the end of election campaign and therefore had little impact.

Complaints and Appeals

Overall, the CEC and DEC's have met their responsibilities related to adjudication of complaints, and ensured that the electoral challenges were generally considered in a timely manner and with respect for the due process principles. The CEC established a regularly updated register of complaints and posted its decisions on the website within 24 hours of their issuance. However, the CEC also responded to numerous complaints by means of a letter, without passing an official decision, thus depriving the complainant of the possibility to appeal in court.

The vast majority of CEC decisions on complaints were related to electoral campaigning in the media. Complaints referred mostly to unethical campaigning, extensive coverage of the President in media, and use of national or foreign symbols or personalities. Other complaints were related to posters destruction, absence of legally required indication that a material is election related and omission of the indication that the material had been paid from the electoral fund. The rejection of a considerable number of such complaints appeared to stem from a lack of sufficient evidence.

In the regions, destruction of posters and their display in unauthorized locations were by far the most frequent subjects of complaints filed either with DEC or with the police. Other complaints included allegations of obstruction of campaigning by local government authorities or police, use of public resources for campaigning and illegal campaigning by public authorities or DEC's members.

As of 4 April, the Supreme Court heard some 24 appeals. These were primarily related to the decisions by the CEC on the establishment of polling stations abroad, stamping of voters' IDs, postponement of broadcasting of debates until after the end of the candidate registration process, as well as challenges to CEC decisions on campaign-related issues. The Supreme Court upheld the original decisions in almost all cases.

Two applications by prospective independent candidates were rejected by the CEC due to an insufficient number of valid signatures submitted. Both candidates challenged the CEC decisions at the Supreme Court, which upheld the decisions of the CEC.

Participation of Women

Although most competitors included social and family issues in their platforms, specific topics related to women or gender equality were not evident during the campaign and parties did not specifically target female voters.

According to the CEC, there were 305 women candidates competing in the election, constituting 25,7 per cent of the total number of candidates. Twenty-two women (18,3 per cent) were positioned among the first ten candidates on the respective party lists; however,

five of them on one list of the “European Action” (MAE). Two parties, AMN and UCM, did not include any woman among first ten positions on their lists.

In the outgoing parliament, women held 21,8 per cent of seats. The current Prime Minister is a woman and ran third on the candidate list of the PCRM. One of the nine CEC members is a woman and nine out of 35 DECs are headed by women. Women were generally over-represented at the lower level of election administration, with 64 per cent of PEBs headed by women.

Participation of National Minorities

Although persons belonging to national minorities constitute a considerable part of population, issues related to national minorities did not play a prominent role in the election campaign. Official information, party campaign materials and ballots were provided both in the State language and in Russian, which enjoys the status of ‘language of inter-ethnic communication’ and is spoken by most persons belonging to national minorities.

While no official data on the ethnicity of candidates was made available by the CEC, it appears that several parties included representatives of national minorities on their candidate lists. No concerns were raised regarding the ethnic composition of electoral bodies.

The recent changes to the Election Code regarding multiple citizenship may adversely affect political participation of persons belonging to national minorities. As during previous elections, the participation of persons belonging to the Roma minority remained comparatively low, and they were not specifically targeted by most parties.

Election Observers

The Election Code provides for the observation of the election process by international and domestic nongovernmental organizations, as well as by representatives of electoral contestants. Overall the CEC accredited 2,532 domestic non-partisan observers.

Under the umbrella NGO “Civic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections – Coalition 2009” comprising 70 civil society organizations, the League for Defense of Human Rights of Moldova (LADOM) deployed 44 long-term observers and published five reports on the pre-electoral process. LADOM deployed some 2,102 observers to polling stations on election day and to conduct, in addition to polling day observation, a parallel vote count in most polling stations.

Election Day

Election day was well-organized and took place in calm and peaceful atmosphere, without any major incidents reported. Voting was observed in some 1,300 polling stations in all electoral districts. The overall conduct of voting was assessed as good and very good in 98 per cent of polling stations visited.

The IEOM observers reported good knowledge of voting procedures by PEB members, with few instances of inconsistent application of the law. Problems observed included PEBs accepting the invitation to vote as identification document in 23 per cent of polling stations observed and not always retaining AVCs as stipulated in the CEC regulation 20 per cent of polling stations visited. Unauthorized persons, mainly police or local authorities,

were present in 4 per cent of polling stations observed, however, there were only isolated reports of these persons trying to influence voters.

Other problems reported by observers were related to the secrecy of the vote with cases of group voting having been reported from 6 per cent of polling stations visited and some polling premises equipped with ballot booths with transparent or no curtains. Ballot boxes were not sealed properly in 3 per cent of polling stations observed. According to the CEC, approximately 25 per cent of ballots were printed in Russian language. IEOM observers reported instances of ballots in Russian not being available to voters in Copaceni (DEC Singerei) and in Birnova and Sauca (both DEC Ocnita). Observers also noted that candidate lists were not posted inside 75 per cent of polling stations visited.

According to the preliminary analysis conducted by the IEOM, voters added on supplementary lists across the country did not exceed 1,5 per cent.

Observers reported that 61 per cent of polling stations visited were not accessible to voters with disabilities. Domestic observers were present in 78 per cent of the polling stations visited, with 42 per cent of them belonging to the umbrella-NGO Coalition 2009. In addition, observers nominated by electoral contestants were present in 97 per cent of polling stations visited, with the majority representing PCRM, PSDM, PLDM, AMN, PL and PDM.

A total of 103 counts were observed by the IEOM. The vote count was assessed less positively than voting, with observers characterizing it as very good and good in 93 per cent of observations, and bad and very bad in 7 per cent of cases. Significant procedural problems were encountered in a number of vote counts observed. The law requires that before the beginning of the counting process unused ballots are counted, cancelled with a special stamp, packed separately and sealed. This procedure was not followed in 17 per cent of observations. Stamps "VOTAT" used for marking ballots were not collected and securely stored before counting in 7 per cent of observations.

In 9 per cent of cases, observers reported that a discrepancy was revealed between the number of ballots found in the mobile ballot box and the number of voters on the supplementary list for mobile voting. Observers reported that in 9 per cent of counts observed, the PEB did not establish the number of ballots issued by counting the signatures on the voter list. In violation of procedures, 21 per cent of PEBs did not establish the number of ballots found in the regular box.

During 20 per cent of counts observed, controversies arose with regard to the validity of a ballot, with observers assessing in some cases that the criteria applied to determine ballot eligibility were unreasonable or inconsistent. In 30 per cent of cases, the PEBs encountered difficulties in filling out the results protocol. Some instances were reported of figures announced not having been accurately recorded, result protocols having been filled out in pencil and protocols not signed in presence of all PEB members. In contravention of the legal requirement, the results protocol was not immediately posted outside the polling station in 64 per cent of cases, and in 10 per cent of the observations, observers or representatives of contestants were prevented from following the results handover process to the DEC.

The tabulation of results at DEC received an overall positive assessment; however it was assessed negatively in 25 per cent of reports, with the working atmosphere at some DEC characterized as disorganized and chaotic. Observers stated that DEC had difficulties in

completing DEC results protocols in 13 per cent of cases. Representatives of electoral contestants were encountered in 76 per cent of tabulation processes observed, whilst the presence of unauthorized persons was noted in 17 per cent of cases. Transparency of the tabulation process was not always ensured, with observers not having been able to follow manual and computer tabulation in 25 and 26 per cent of observations, respectively.

*This statement is also available in the State language and Russian.
However, the English version remains the only official document.*

Mission Information & Acknowledgements

Mr. Petros Efthymiou (Greece), Head of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA) Delegation, was appointed as Special Coordinator by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office to lead the OSCE short-term observers. Mr. David Wilshire (UK) led the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) Delegation, and Mrs. Marianne Mikko (Estonia) led the European Parliament (EP) delegation. Mr. Nikolai Vulchanov (Bulgaria) is the Head of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission.

The OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission (EOM) opened in Chisinau on 26 February with 42 experts and long-term observers of 23 OSCE participating States deployed in the capital and seven regional centers. On election day, the IEOM deployed some 400 short-term observers from 43 OSCE participating States, including 70 members of the OSCE PA delegation, 19 from PACE, and 13 from the European Parliament. The IEOM observed voting throughout the Republic of Moldova in some 1,300 polling stations out of a total of 1,977, and counting was observed in some 100 polling stations in all electoral districts. The IEOM was also present in all District Electoral Councils to observe the tabulation of results.

The IEOM wishes to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Central Election Commission, and other State and local authorities for their support and co-operation during the course of the observation. The IEOM also wishes to express its appreciation to the OSCE Mission to Moldova, the OSCE Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, other international organizations and embassies accredited in Chisinau for their support throughout the duration of the mission.

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