



Turkish elections democratic, but improvements needed on fundamental freedoms

ANKARA, Turkey, 13 June 2011 – Turkey’s well-managed, democratic elections demonstrated pluralism but also showed a need for improvements on fundamental freedoms, according to international election observers from the Parliamentary Assemblies of the OSCE and Council of Europe.

“To fully live up to its democratic commitments, Turkey must do more than run efficient professional elections on the day of the vote,” said Pia Christmas-Moeller (Denmark), head of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly delegation. “Free expression and a media environment in which reporters are free from political pressure and intimidation are critical for Turkey to strengthen its democracy and be a model in the wider region.”

Observers noted the country’s high threshold for parties to win representation in Parliament.

“The ten per cent threshold, by far the highest in Europe, remains a central issue in these elections. In a country with a sizable number of people belonging to national minorities and with a long history of internal divisions, this threshold may hinder communication and interplay between the populace and its legislature,” said Kerstin Lundgren (Sweden), head of Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe delegation.

Voters in this election had a genuine choice after a vigorous campaign period. For the first time, candidates were allowed to campaign in languages other than Turkish. Observers applauded the Supreme Election Board for its professional management of the election and the open access granted to observers, which promoted public confidence in the process.

The observers, comprised of 61 Members of Parliaments from 30 countries, observed voting in regions spanning the whole country on Election Day. They said there is a need to promote more participation and representation of women in the political life of the country.

The full post-election statement is online at www.oscepa.org and <http://assembly.coe.int>.

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Multimedia:

Photos of the election observation mission are available at www.flickr.com/oscepa

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