

Battelli: BiH general elections ‘a promising step’

The general elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina on 3 October represented further progress and, except for legal restrictions of voting rights, were conducted generally in line with OSCE commitments, international observers concluded in a preliminary statement issued on 4 October. They stressed that certain key areas require action.

“We have seen yet another demonstration that the electoral process in Bosnia and Herzegovina has stabilized, which is a further promising step towards full integration into the European structures. I congratulate the people of the country and also the election administration for the conduct of these elections. I hope we will soon see the new parliament address the remaining issues,” said Special Co-ordinator Roberto Battelli who led the short-term OSCE observer mission and headed the OSCE PA delegation.

Voters could choose from a broad range of candidates representing a wide political spectrum at state and entity level.

Election day was orderly and calm. Voting was assessed positively, but the counting process was assessed less positively, with numerous procedural irregularities observed. The unusually high percentage of invalid ballots is a matter of concern.

The election commissions at the central and municipal level enjoyed general confidence among electoral stakeholders. The appointment process of polling station committees, however, was tainted by the practice of contestants nominating committee members affiliated with another party



or candidate, or contestants trading seats.

The election campaign was generally calm, although occasionally marked by nationalist rhetoric and inflammatory statements. The variety of views presented in the media provided voters with the opportunity to make informed choices, although populist rhetoric often detracted from issues of substance. While contestants addressed economic, social and European integration topics, constitutional issues and underlying ethnic divisions remained omnipresent.

Mr. Battelli headed the OSCE PA delegation of nearly 40 parliamentarians as well as more than 250 OSCE short-term observers. The mission worked in close co-operation with the parliamentary assemblies of NATO and the Council of Europe, and was supported by the OSCE PA's Special Representative, Ambassador Andreas Nothelle, Programme Officer Roberto Montella, Research/Publications Officer Nat Parry and Research Assistant Laura-Marie Toepfer.

President Eftymiou addresses OSCE Review Conference in Warsaw

Addressing the opening plenary session of the first OSCE Review Conference to be held in 11 years, President Petros Eftymiou called for courage as the Organization moves towards the Astana Summit later this year. He urged participants to consider how the OSCE can strengthen its work with meaningful political commitments.

The Review Conference, convened in preparation for the Astana Summit in December, is being held in three parts over the coming two months, in Warsaw, Vienna and Astana.

In his address, the President welcomed the inclusion of civil society representatives in the conference, noting that holding governments to account on their commitments is at the heart of OSCE work. However, he also expressed disappointment that such a review of commitments is an exceptional event. “In my opinion, open reviewing of commitments should be an integral part of the day-to-day work of the OSCE,” he said.

Matteo Mecacci, Rapporteur of the Assembly's General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian

Affairs, also participated in the Warsaw Review Conference. Addressing one of the Working Sessions of the conference, Mecacci discussed OSCE PA work regarding abolition of the death penalty. The Assembly's resolution on this topic from the Oslo Annual Session was welcomed by participants.

President Eftymiou also took the opportunity of the Warsaw conference to conduct a Presidential Visit to Poland, holding meetings with the Speaker of the Sejm of Poland, Grzegorz Schetyrna and the Deputy Speaker of the Senate, Zbigniew Romaszewski, as well as with the delegation of Poland to the OSCE PA, headed by Pawel Ponceyljusz. Discussions particularly focused on upcoming work by the Assembly and the planned Summit in Astana.

From the International Secretariat, the visits were supported by Secretary General Spencer Oliver, Deputy Secretary General Tina Schoen, and Presidential Advisor Andreas Baker. President Eftymiou was accompanied by Chara Papazoudi from the Hellenic Parliament.