

News from Copenhagen

Mecacci: Serbian elections open and competitive, but transparency needed



Matteo Mecacci talks to poll workers in Belgrade.

Serbia's parliamentary and early presidential elections on 6 May took place in an open and competitive environment but additional efforts are needed to improve the transparency of the election process and the functioning of the media, said Matteo Mecacci (Italy) in delivering the post-election statement on behalf of the OSCE on 7 May.

Observers noted that voters were provided with a wide degree of choices and contestants were able to campaign freely. Most electoral stakeholders expressed a high degree of confidence in the election administration, which carried out its duties professionally. Media ownership, however, lacks transparency.

"These were open and competitive elections, thanks to the legal reforms implemented over the last few years. I'm glad to say that the citizens of Serbia are moving forward on their path to building a fully fledged democracy," said Mecacci on behalf of the OSCE and the OSCE PA. The results of the presidential election require a run-off between the top two candidates, Boris Tadic and Tomislav Nikolic, to be held on 20 May.

With more than 30 participants, the OSCE PA delegation was supported by the OSCE/ODIHR and was joined by parliamentary colleagues from the Council of Europe, led by PA Vice-President Jean-Charles Gardetto. Mecacci made two pre-election visits to Serbia, on 19-23 March and 11-12 April.

The mission was supported by Deputy Director for Field Operations Roberto Montella and Deputy Director of Administration Marc Carillet from the OSCE PA's Vienna Office.

De Donnea: Armenian elections competitive, but shortcomings remain



Francois-Xavier de Donnea speaks with observers in Yerevan.

At a Yerevan press conference on 7 May, Francois-Xavier de Donnea (Belgium) stated on behalf of the OSCE that Armenia's 6 May parliamentary elections featured a vibrant and largely peaceful campaign, with overall balanced media coverage, but pressure on voters, violations of campaign provisions and a deficient complaints process created an unequal playing field.

"Armenia deserves recognition for its electoral reforms and its open and peaceful campaign environment but, in this race, several stakeholders too often failed to comply with the law and election commissions too often failed to enforce it," stated de Donnea, who was appointed by the OSCE Chair-in-Office as special co-ordinator to lead the short-term OSCE observer mission on the recommendation of the OSCE PA president.

The elections were held under a new Electoral Code that provided a sound legal framework for conducting democratic elections, but stakeholders failed to implement important aspects of the new law and the manner in which complaints were dealt with undermined the right to effective legal redress. Election day was generally calm and peaceful, but marked by organizational problems.

The OSCE PA observation mission to Armenia included more than 70 participants who were joined by colleagues from the Council of Europe and the European Parliament and worked closely with the OSCE/ODIHR. Deputy Secretary General Tina Schoen, Communications Director Neil Simon and Operations Officer Iryna Sabashuk supported the mission.

Albanian Foreign Minister Haxhinasto visits International Secretariat

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Albania Edmond Haxhinasto visited the OSCE PA's International Secretariat on 8 May, meeting with Secretary General Spencer Oliver, Deputy Secretaries General Tina Schoen and Gustavo Pallares and Senior Counsellor Semyon Dzakhaev.

Accompanied by Albanian Ambassador to Denmark Arben Cici; Chief of Staff of the Albanian Ministry for Foreign Affairs Ilir Melo; and Aida Skja, First Secretary in

the Albanian Embassy in Copenhagen, Minister Haxhinasto expressed Albania's pride in hosting the 2012 OSCE PA Fall Meetings, scheduled for 5-7 October in Tirana.



Spencer Oliver and Edmond Haxhinasto meet in Copenhagen.