

In Turkey, OSCE PA cites wide choice, high threshold and media freedom



Vilija Aleknaitė Abramikiene (MP, Lithuania) delivers the post-election statement alongside Ignacio Sanchez Amor (MP, Spain) in Ankara, 8 June 2015.



Ignacio Sanchez Amor speaks with a poll worker at a polling station in Ankara, 7 June 2015.

The 7 June parliamentary elections in Turkey were characterized by active citizen participation, with voters provided a wide array of choices, but the 10 per cent threshold to enter parliament limits political pluralism, OSCE observers concluded in a statement issued Monday. Media freedom is an area of serious concern, with media outlets and individual journalists critical of the ruling party being subject to pressure and intimidation during the campaign, the observers said.

“The elections engaged society in a vibrant and hard-fought campaign, and demonstrated that there is a real choice from among strong political forces in Turkey,” said PA Vice-President Vilija Aleknaitė Abramikiene, Special Co-ordinator and Leader of the Short-Term OSCE Observer Mission. “Remaining challenges, including on media freedoms and the high threshold for entry into the parliament, should be addressed to better reflect people’s choices.”

Unfortunately, the campaign was tainted by a high number of attacks on party offices and serious incidents of physical attacks, some resulting in fatalities. The elections were

organized professionally, but greater transparency in election administration would increase trust, the statement said.

“While Turkey has a history of a generally functioning, pluralistic system, challenges related to freedom of expression and the dominant role played by the President in the campaign partially undermined fairness in this election,” said Head of the OSCE PA Delegation Ignacio Sanchez Amor, who also serves as Special Representative on OSCE Border Issues. “Turkey clearly plays a stabilizing role in a tough neighbourhood, but these security challenges cannot be a justification for backsliding on democratic commitments.”

The OSCE PA Delegation consisted of 57 participants who deployed to several regions of Turkey. The mission was supported by OSCE PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver, Director of Presidential Administration Roberto Montella, Director of Elections Andreas Baker, Communications Director Richard Solash, Operations Officer Iryna Sabashuk, Programme Officer Loic Poulain, and Research Fellow Anna Di Domenico.

Battelli concludes visit to South East Europe with meetings in Skopje



Special Representative Roberto Battelli (left) meets with Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski (center) and Foreign Minister Nikola Poposki (right) in Skopje, 5 June.

The OSCE PA’s Special Representative on South East Europe, Roberto Battelli (MP, Slovenia), wrapped up a visit to the region last week with a series of meetings in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on 4-5 June. In discussions with governmental and parliamentary leaders, Battelli stressed the urgent need for crisis resolution, the return of a functioning parliament and broad national dialogue.

In a joint meeting with Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and Foreign Minister Nikola Poposki on 5 June, Battelli received detailed information from the government’s perspective on the recent tragic events in Kumanovo and on developments toward political resolution. In a separate meeting with Foreign Minister Poposki, the sides discussed the status of

the country’s Euro-Atlantic integration and the issue of ethnic integration within society.

Battelli also met with SDSM leader Zoran Zaev, Speaker of Parliament Trajko Veljanovski, the country’s Delegation to the OSCE PA, and Ali Ahmeti, the leader of the Albanian party DUI, which is currently in the governing coalition. Battelli also met with a broad range of civil society organizations and international organizations, and received thorough briefings by the staff of the OSCE Mission to Skopje.

He was accompanied in Skopje by the OSCE PA’s Special Representative in Vienna, Ambassador Andreas Nothelle.

Annual Session deadline reminder

Delegations are kindly reminded of the following deadlines for the Annual Session in Helsinki on 5-9 July.

- **21 June:** Copenhagen Deadline for Compromise Supplementary Items
- **21 June:** Copenhagen Deadline for Amendments to Committee Draft Resolutions
- **28 June:** Copenhagen Deadline for Amendments to Supplementary Items