

OSCE PA Leadership Observes Presidential Election in Georgia

On Monday 5th January 2004 in Tbilisi, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Bruce George, acting as Special Co-ordinator of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, delivered the preliminary post-election statement on the 4 January presidential election, in conjunction with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the European Parliament and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR).

The joint statement concluded that the extraordinary presidential election demonstrated notable progress over previous elections and brought the country closer to meeting international commitments and standards for democratic elections.

There were nevertheless clear concerns, particularly regarding political imbalance in election administration and failure of some election officials to maintain distance from participants.

President George said that the authorities showed the political will to conduct democratic elections, making a welcome contrast to the deeply flawed 2 November 2003 parliamentary elections. He emphasized that the forthcoming parliamentary elections will be the true test for the new authorities of their willingness and ability to conduct genuinely democratic elections and that he looked forward to returning to witness further steps towards achieving international standards.

OSCE PA Treasurer Jerry Grafstein (Canada) acted as deputy Head of the OSCE PA Observer Team, which also included OSCE PA Vice Presidents Giovanni Kessler (Italy) and Barbara Hearing (Switzerland), Secretary General Spencer Oliver, as well as MPs Engelbert Weilharter (Austria), Karl Boden (Austria), Cemal Cavdarli (Belgium), Seraphin Van den Eynde (Belgium), Petr Sulak (Czech Republic), Maric Rusova (Czech Republic), Peeter Tuluiste (Estonia), Rolf Kramer (Germany), Luigi Compagna (Italy), Aigars Petersons (Latvia), Elita Snepste (Latvia), Vytautas Kvietkauskas



Demetrio Volcic, Head of the European Parliament delegation, presidential candidate Mikhail Saakashvili, OSCE PA President Bruce George, and Mátyás Eörsi, Head of the parliamentary delegation of the Council of Europe, at a briefing in Tbilisi before election day.

(Lithuania), Romanas Algima Sedlickas (Lithuania), Bert Koenders (Netherlands), Afif Demirkiran (Turkey), Orhan Ziya Diren (Turkey), Frederick Ponsonby (United Kingdom), staff member Michael Ochs of the US Helsinki Commission, OSCE PA Press Counsellor Jan Jooren and Programme Officer Tina Schoen.

On 5 January the OSCE PA Delegation had a meeting with Acting Georgian President Nino Burjanadze, presently a Vice-President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

Vice-President Ihor Ostash leads OSCE Election Observation Mission to Serbia

Twelve parliamentarians from nine OSCE Member States participated in the OSCE Election Observation Mission to the parliamentary elections in Serbia on 28 December 2003. The Delegation was led by Ihor Ostash (Ukraine), Vice-President of the PA. Other Members included Vice-President Gert Weisskirchen (Germany), Wolfgang Grossruck (Austria), Francoise Colinia (Belgium), Patrick Moriau (Belgium), Anissa Tamsamani (Belgium), Søren Søndergaard (Denmark), Jozsef Ekes (Hungary), Gabor Hars (Hungary), Kjell Engebretsen (Norway), Mustafa Tuna (Turkey) and Thomas Cox (UK). The Delegation was accompanied by Pentti Väänänen, Deputy Secretary General, and Igors Aizstrauts, Secretary of the Latvian Delegation.

The Election Observation Mission was a joint operation of the OSCE PA, the OSCE/ODIHR, and the Council of Europe PA and Council for Local and Regional Authorities.

During the press conference on 29 December, Vice-President Ostash concluded that the elections were generally carried out in accordance with international standards. He also recommended, however, that the Serbian election law be reformed as a matter of urgency.

On 29 December, Ihor Ostash met with the Foreign Minister of Serbia and Montenegro, Goran Svilanovic, to discuss the Election Observation Mission's findings and recommendations.



Deputy Head of the PA Observer Team, Treasurer Jerry Grafstein (Canada) observes the opening of a polling station in Tbilisi.