Kyrgyz Elections: A “Missed Opportunity”

Announcing the conclusions of the OSCE election observation mission to the parliamentary elections held in Kyrgyzstan on 16 December, Vice-President Kimmo Kiljunen expressed his personal disappointment at the “backsliding” noted in the elections process. Speaking at a press conference in Bishkek on 17 December, Mr. Kiljunen said that the elections failed to meet a number of OSCE commitments.

Noting that he had led the past two OSCE election observation missions to Kyrgyzstan, he stressed that “political pluralism which I have seen develop is undermined by this missed opportunity.” Mr. Kiljunen was appointed as the OSCE Special Co-ordinator for the OSCE short-term election observation mission of some 250 observers, and also led the 26-member OSCE PA delegation, which included election observation veterans, Vice-President Joao Soares, Portugal, Jesus Lopez-Medel, Spain, and Christian Miesch, Switzerland.

In particular, the OSCE observation mission expressed concern at imbalance in media coverage of the election campaign. Also, a complicated new system for translating votes into parliamentary seats, which includes both national and regional thresholds, creates the real possibility of a situation in which no parties would be represented in parliament. The mission particularly expressed concern that no final decision had been made by the courts prior to election day regarding the precise interpretation of this provision.

The mission positively noted the extensive presence of domestic observers in polling stations on election day, which helped to enhance transparency of the process. However, OSCE observers reported some election day violations including a lack of uniform application of procedures and ballot-box stuffing.

The OSCE PA mission worked in close co-operation with the long-term observation mission deployed by the OSCE/ODIHR. From the International Secretariat the delegation was accompanied by Ambassador Andreas Nothelle, Programme Officer Anna Chernova, and Research Assistant Dadojan Azimov from the International Secretariat supported the delegations.