

News from Copenhagen

OSCE PA leads election observers in Moldova

The 5 April 2009 parliamentary elections took place in an overall pluralistic environment, offering voters distinct political alternatives and meeting many OSCE and Council of Europe commitments. Further improvements are required to ensure an electoral process free from undue administrative interference and to increase public confidence.

That was the conclusion of the International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) to Moldova in its preliminary post-election statement delivered by Petros Efthymiou at a press conference in Chisinau on 6 April 2009. Mr. Efthymiou headed the delegation from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and served as the Special Co-ordinator of the OSCE short term observers. The IEOM also included the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the European Parliament and the OSCE/ODIHR.

Voting on Election Day was well-organized and took place in a calm and peaceful atmosphere, without any major incidents reported, the statement said. Observers noted good knowledge of electoral procedures both by election commission members and most voters. Counting was also assessed positively, but a number of significant procedural shortcomings were noted. Processing of results by District Electoral Councils requires further improvement.

"I am delighted with the progress of democracy in Moldova. These elections were very good and they gave me great confidence in the future of this country," Mr. Efthymiou said at the press conference.

The media provided contestants with opportunities to convey messages to the electorate, in particular through debates and paid airtime, and therefore allowed voters to make an informed choice, the statement noted. However, the public broadcaster *Moldova 1* in its news offered preferential treatment of the authorities, blurring the distinction between the coverage of duties of top State officials and their campaign activities.

The observers also noted that party lists and candidates were registered in an inclusive process, and the Central Election Commission operated in an overall professional



Petros Efthymiou at a press conference in Chisinau

and transparent manner. Also, the process of adjudication of complaints and appeals by electoral bodies and courts ensured that electoral challenges were generally considered in a timely manner and with respect for principles of due process.

However, observers stated that there were several shortcomings that needed to be addressed. The campaign environment was affected by frequent allegations of intimidation, including by the police, of voters and candidates, and allegations of misuse of administrative resources. Also, voter registration lacked uniformity and an adequate legal framework, the observers noted.

The Election Code generally provided an adequate basis for the conduct of democratic elections. Nonetheless, the combination of the electoral threshold, prohibition of pre-electoral alliances and the restriction of electoral rights of persons with multiple citizenship created obstacles for many political parties and candidates. In addition, the voter turnout requirement for an election to be valid allows for cycles of failed elections.

As in previous elections, voting did not take place on the territory that is, since 1992, under the *de facto* control of the Transnistrian authorities. Voters residing in Transnistria could vote at ten special polling stations. In Corjova, a disputed commune on the eastern bank, voting was aggressively prevented during the day by a seemingly organized crowd.

Danish Parliament discusses the OSCE

On 2 April, the Danish Parliament held a debate focused on the OSCE, with active participation by Members of the Danish Delegation to the Assembly. Following the presentation of a statement by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the spokespersons of political parties in the parliament each discussed the Minister's report.

Participants in the debate included: Peter Juel Jensen, Head of the Danish Delegation to the OSCE PA, Vice-President Pia Christmas-Moeller, Jeppe Kofod, Morten Messerschmidt, Kamal Qureshi, Helle Sjelle, Niels Helveg Petersen, and Frank

Aaen. Members stressed the importance of the OSCE as a forum for open dialogue and applauded the Organization's inclusive approach. The parliamentarians particularly discussed proposals recently put forward regarding a new European security treaty as well as election observation operations by the OSCE.

In responding to the comments from the parliamentarians, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Per Stig Moeller, welcomed the broad consensus. The Foreign Minister also expressed his willingness to work with parliamentarians to address some of the issues raised.