

Battelli notes competitive Albanian election but criticizes partisanship

Albania's parliamentary elections on 23 June were competitive with active citizen participation throughout the campaign and genuine respect for fundamental freedoms, reported Roberto Battelli, Special Co-ordinator of the OSCE short-term observer mission, in a statement delivered in Tirana on Monday. The atmosphere of mistrust between the two main political forces however tainted the electoral environment and challenged the administration of the entire electoral process, he said.

"This was a substantive election offering voters real choices at a critical time for Albania. It is now time for the country's political leaders to listen to the people's verdict," said Battelli.

Sixty-six political parties and two independent candidates were registered to stand in a largely inclusive process that offered voters a choice, the statement said.

"Albania is fortunate to have strong political forces that have presented alternative visions for this country, but by not appointing officials to promptly count the ballots, political parties are unnecessarily making their voters wait for the results of these elections," said João Soares, the Head of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly delegation.

Around 50 PA election experts participated in the election observation mission, including parliamentarians from 15 OSCE participating States. Battelli, a member of parliament from Slovenia, was appointed by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office as the Special Co-ordinator to lead the short-term



OSCE observation mission and deliver the post-election statement on behalf of the OSCE. He also serves as OSCE PA Treasurer and Special Representative on South East Europe. He has observed 20 elections in the region since 1994, leading six of these missions.

Joao Soares, a member of parliament from Portugal and former President of the Assembly, served as Head of the PA delegation within the mission. Special Representative Amb. Andreas Nothelle served as the mission's chief of staff. Director of Presidential Administration Roberto Montella, Operations Officer Iryna Sabashuk, Senior Adviser to the Special Co-ordinator Andreas Baker and Presidential Assistant Christian Pauzenberger supported the delegation as well.

The OSCE PA has now observed seven elections in Albania.

PA staff make final preparations for Annual Session



The conference organizing team of the OSCE PA International Secretariat, led by Deputy Secretary General Gustavo Pallares, has arrived in Istanbul to make final preparations for the 22nd Annual Session. Hosted by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, the meeting runs 29 June – 3 July at Istanbul's Lutfi Kirdar International Convention Exhibition Center.

Pallares, Senior Counsellor Semyon Dzakhaev, Conference Co-ordinator Odile Lelarge, Administrative Director Kurt Lerras, Assistant to the Secretary General Dana Bjerregaard, Administrative Assistant Lindsay McGill, and IT Specialist

Stephen Paul are holding meetings with counterparts from the Turkish Parliament and Convention Center to ensure that everything is in order when nearly 300 parliamentarians arrive later this week. Additional staff members are travelling to Istanbul Wednesday and Thursday.

More than 700 individuals in total have registered for the session. OSCE Chairman-in-Office and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Leonid Kozhara, OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier and high-level host officials are expected to address the opening plenary session. Several OSCE ambassadors from Vienna, along with officials from various foreign ministries, will also attend.

The meeting includes a packed agenda with 29 supplementary items to be considered in addition to the three general committee resolutions. With all of the amendments to the resolutions, an estimated 270 votes will be cast over the five days.

For the first time, the International Secretariat will be live tweeting during the Annual Session, using the hashtag #AS2013. Meetings of the session will also be streaming at www.oscepa.org.