



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION 2002 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION – FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

STATEMENT OF PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Skopje, 16 September 2002 - The International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) for the 15 September 2002 election to the Parliament of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is a joint undertaking of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE/PA), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the European Parliament, and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR).

The OSCE participating States and the European Commission contributed generously to the IEOM with the secondment of some 850 international observers, the largest mission deployed. In addition, more than 3,000 domestic non-partisan observers monitored the process.

This statement of preliminary findings and conclusions is issued before the announcement of election results and before all complaints and appeals have been addressed by the electoral and judicial authorities.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

The 15 September 2002 parliamentary election in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia were conducted largely in accordance with OSCE commitments and international standards for democratic elections.

This first post-conflict election was an integral component of the Ohrid Framework Agreement that ended the crisis in 2001 and is perceived as a test for the return of the country to stability. If any disputes about election results can be resolved successfully in the days ahead and the new Parliament can assume its mandate within the normal timeframe, then this election could represent a significant improvement over recent elections and a major contribution towards restoring a sustainable political process in the country.

In view of the challenging political background and in light of recent election observation conclusions, the 2002 parliamentary election reflects the following achievements:

- The new election laws adopted in June 2002 effectively addressed some shortcomings observed previously, and overall provided an adequate legislative basis for elections;
- Election commissions generally conducted their work in a neutral and professional manner, and the State Election Commission (SEC) in particular operated transparently and in a collegial way. The SEC issued instructions which clarified the interpretation and improved the uniform application of the election laws;
- The political campaign was relatively restrained;
- The policing of campaign rallies, other electoral events, and election day was proper;

- The media are broadly pluralistic and voters were offered a wide range of information on the activities of contestants. Public regulatory bodies monitored and reported on political advertising and coverage of the campaign on television, but these reports did not lead to enforcement actions; and
- As a result of both government actions and civil society programs, there was greater opportunity for individuals to check the voter registers and request corrections. Thus, public confidence in the voter registers was strengthened.

The election campaign period was marred at times by violent incident, including attacks on and killing of police officers and hostage taking not necessarily related to the election, attacks on party offices, as well as threats and attacks on media representatives. In addition, certain actions by the authorities also contributed to heightened tension during the campaign. Violent incidents, threats, and apparently selective application of law enforcement proceedings against candidates have no place in a democratic electoral process. Nevertheless, the election process worked well and demonstrated considerable resilience in the face of these pressures.

Additional shortcomings became evident during the electoral process:

- State television channels did not provide fair and equal coverage of the election. There were numerous violations by both State and commercial channels of the rules regarding political advertising and election coverage;
- The election laws still contain ambiguities and inconsistencies, especially with respect to the provisions on complaints and appeals, the determination and announcement of election results, and the voting rights of non-resident citizens; and
- The method of appointment of election administration bodies requires further consideration.

Election day was characterized by a high turnout of voters (more than 70%), few and isolated incidents of violence, and in general an orderly process, except for a high incidence of group voting. The vote count was largely free of problems as well. During the days ahead, the role of the State Election Commission (SEC) and the Supreme Court in resolving any disputes will be an important factor in reaching final conclusions about the election.

As such, the institutions represented in the IEOM will monitor developments in the electoral process in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia until the certification and implementation of the results. The institutions represented in the IEOM are prepared to return to Skopje for discussions on the findings and conclusions of this statement. The institutions are also prepared to assist the authorities and civil society of the country to overcome the remaining challenges.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Background

The 15 September parliamentary election was the third since independence in 1991. It was of particular significance after the difficult last term of Parliament, which faced the refugee crisis resulting from the Kosovo war in 1999 and the security crisis in 2001. The political system was disturbed by these events and Parliament fragmented, with the eight parties in 1998 increasing to 16 this year. Composition of the Government also changed periodically, in particular with the temporary establishment of a “unity government” (May-November 2001) representing the four parties which signed the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA). The current parliamentary election was an integral component of the OFA. Furthermore, it has been widely seen as a test for the return of the country to a regular democratic process and overall stability.

Past election observations by the OSCE/ODIHR concluded that the election laws provided an adequate basis for the effective conduct of elections. At the same time, difficulties were observed due to ambiguities and inconsistencies in the relevant statutes. With respect to the conduct of elections, previous reports noted improvements but documented continuing problems that prevented unqualified endorsement of the processes. In particular, there was failure to prevent irregular and fraudulent activities. In addition, elections had often been conducted in an atmosphere of tension and there was intimidation and violence against voters, election officials and others. Many of the worst abuses occurred during repeat or second-round elections.

Legislative Framework

The Assembly consists of 120 representatives. For the 2002 parliamentary election, three new election laws were enacted: the Law on Election of Members of Parliament of 2002 (“Parliamentary Election Law”), which came into effect in July 2002; the Law on the Voter List (“Voter List Law”); and the Law on Election Districts (“Election District Law”).

The new election laws were part of a larger package of legislation intended to implement the OFA. Agreement was reached among the four OFA signatory parties with encouragement and support from the international community. The Parliamentary Election Law represents a considerable advance over the previous legislation. Numerous improvements have been made to provisions that were identified as problematic in recent elections. At the same time, however, significant deficiencies remain.

The Parliamentary Election Law provides for a new method of election based on multi-district proportional representation. Registered political parties and other submitters (coalitions of parties or “groups of voters”) may contest the election in the districts by nominating closed candidate lists. The new method simplifies the election process by eliminating the requirement for second rounds; it also has the potential to help reduce inter-communal political tension by dividing election contests among six regions, and to enhance the representation of smaller minorities and parties. The formal threshold for winning seats in Parliament was eliminated.

To carry out the new law, six election districts with comparable numbers of registered voters were established through the Election District Law. The six constituencies created under the law do not reflect any established regional boundaries. The districts are nearly equal in the number of registered voters with almost 280,000 each. Two of the districts (No. 3, in the central and northeast areas; and No. 4, in the south and southeast) are overwhelmingly ethnic Macedonian in their composition; two more (No. 1, in the area of the capital, Skopje; and No. 5, in the southwest) are predominantly ethnic Macedonian; one (No. 6, in the northwest) is predominantly ethnic Albanian; and one (No. 2, in the northeast) is ethnically mixed, also including numbers of Roma and ethnic Serbs.

Remaining issues of concern include: over-reliance on the judiciary for membership of election commissions; vague provisions relating to the role of security forces during elections; and ambiguous and inconsistent provisions for the annulment of results, repeat elections, complaints and appeals, and the voting rights of non-resident citizens.

Election Administration

The Parliamentary Election Law establishes a four-level administration system: the State Election Commission (SEC), six Regional Election Commissions (REC); 34 Municipal Election Commissions (MEC); and 2,973 Election Boards (EB).

The SEC, in particular its President, made considerable contributions towards creating an autonomous election administration. The SEC operated in a transparent and generally collegial way, holding regular open plenary meetings and communicating with the public through a press office and web site. International observers were able to attend meetings of SEC working groups and other non-public activities. In general, the RECs and MECs also operated in a transparent manner.

The SEC adopted necessary and useful instructions to address ambiguities and other deficiencies in the new Parliamentary Election Law. Many of these instructions addressed recommendations made by the OSCE/ODIHR and others from the international community. Some of the most important instructions adopted by the SEC concerned the deployment and role of the police; ballot validity; advanced and mobile voting; and voter identification. Additionally, the OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje together with the Ministry of Interior provided much welcome training for some 3,500 police officers regarding their role during the election process.

Appointments to the RECs and MECs were made on time and were generally accepted. However, in accordance with transitional provisions in the law, only the four OFA signatory parties had the right to select full members, although other submitters of candidate lists were entitled to have non-voting representatives. For this election the provision helped to ensure that the election commissions and boards had members from both ruling and opposition parties. For future elections, however, the ambiguous provisions for selecting full members of election commissions may leave out some parties with strong popular support.

While the law provides for secretariats for the SEC and RECs, such services could not be established fully in time for this election. Thus, many administrative tasks had to be assumed by commission members with relatively little technical support from the administration.

Another difficulty in establishing the election commissions related to the method of appointment of their members. Each commission included a substantial complement of judges from courts at various levels who were appointed “with the agreement of” or “upon proposal of” the political parties. The appointment of no fewer than 140 judges based on recommendations by political parties raises serious questions about the future role of judicial appointees in election administration, and undoubtedly contributed to the number of judges who sought to avoid election duty. Raising further concern, two of the Supreme Court judges appointed to the SEC were only named to the Court by Parliament earlier the same day. Overall, at least 244 judges from various courts were appointed to the SEC, RECs and MECs.

EB nominations were mainly made on time, but the requirement that EB presidents and vice presidents should “as a rule” be law graduates could not be met because the required number could not be found, particularly in rural areas, and some qualified persons were reluctant to participate.

Finally, the international community provided an extraordinary level of material and expert support to the election process, including complete equipment kits for polling stations, voter education and information programs, voter outreach programs, logistics officers for election commissions, and training and procedures manuals for election administration personnel. International donors included the European Commission, the US Agency for International Development (USAID), and the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) implemented many of these programs.

Registration of Candidate Lists

List submitters were required to register their candidate lists with the RECs. Registration of candidate lists was accomplished without significant problems, partly since the law allowed list submitters 48 hours to make corrections and adjustments to their submissions.

Only one complaint was filed concerning list registration. Upon complaint by the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA), the SEC overturned the decision of District No. 5 REC not to register their list due to alleged late filing. The SEC decided that a timely submission had been made.

The SEC published the candidate lists for all the district elections on schedule, on 16 August. Altogether, 38 parties, party coalitions and independents registered candidate lists in one or more of the six electoral districts. The number of lists approved in each district was: district No. 1, 31; No. 2, 28; No. 3, 23; No. 4, 22; No. 5, 28; and No. 6, 21.

Voter List

Under the new Voter List Law, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) is responsible for registering voters. For an interim period, the State Bureau for Statistics (SBS) continues to carry out technical operations related to the Voter List (VL). After updating the list with data from other departments (mainly the Ministry of the Interior), the MOJ made the VL available for inspection for citizens in the second half of July. During this period, the public was able to check the VL in local offices of the MoJ, and request corrections if necessary.

Public inspection of the VL was successful, with nearly 80,000 citizens checking the list. Subsequently, political parties and candidates were able to obtain an electronic copy of the corrected VL.

The VL was completed by the MoJ and submitted to the SEC on schedule, and was approved by the SEC on 24 August. No complaint was made to the SEC concerning the list, although the head of an organization representing ethnic Macedonians abroad made a submission concerning certain deletions. The total number of registered voters is 1,664,296, some 30,000 voters more than for the last election in 2000.

While the VL was subject to public inspection and request for correction, it may still contain inaccurate information concerning the residence of voters who did not check their registration. This would primarily be the result of a very large number of citizens who have emigrated, and whose names and former addresses may continue to appear in the VL based on previous registration.

In early August, information began to emerge, attributable in part to statements by the Minister of Interior, that a large number of passports were being issued by his Ministry (MoI) to ethnic Macedonians abroad. Later in August, the Minister of Justice disclosed that he had ordered the removal of some 3,200 names from the VL. These were names of individuals who had been issued passports by the MoI, and whose data was provided to the MoJ for inclusion in the VL shortly before the period for corrections ended.

Enquiries determined that these names, whose residences were listed at the address of MoI headquarters in Skopje, had been incorporated in VL data and assigned to several nearby polling units. The intent of these actions was unclear, and the MoI continued to maintain that the names were validly proposed for inclusion in the VL. The names were, however, deleted upon order of the Minister of Justice and the SEC subsequently approved the VL without them.

Ballot Distribution and Advanced Voting

The law provides that military personnel on duty, prisoners and internally displaced persons (IDPs) cast ballots at their current location one day in advance of polling. The SEC had to design a complex system of delivery and return of ballots from these locations to the districts in which they would be applied, and where IDPs would vote.

Similar considerations applied to mobile balloting for sick and disabled voters, which under the law was conducted the day before the election for persons who requested it three days in advance. This presented major practical problems, in view of the fact that the ballot papers would already be packaged for delivery to the EBs at that time, and additionally that the EBs could be required to carry them out of area.

For these reasons, the SEC issued an instruction greatly limiting the number of voters who could request this service, and the MECs took actions to reduce demands, through discouraging applications and possibly permitting the mobile voting to be carried out on election day. To the

extent that applications for mobile voting were limited, access to the polls for handicapped, disabled and sick voters may have been restrained.

The Campaign

All major parties campaigned actively, with rallies, media advertising and door-to-door canvassing being the main forms of promotion. While inflammatory rhetoric was used at times, rallies of political parties were held in a peaceful and orderly manner. This was all the more remarkable in the context of general security concerns and deep divisions resulting from the crisis of 2001. Party competition took place largely within ethnic communities. For this election, the main parties signed a Code of Conduct facilitated by an international non-governmental organization, the National Democratic Institute (NDI).

The coalition of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization - Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) with the Liberal Party (LP) stressed Government achievements, in particular in the field of de-nationalization. This coalition combined general party campaigning with the dedication of various facilities by the government, including religious sites. The inauguration of a large, illuminated cross on Vodno mountain overlooking Skopje was an important campaign event, which featured in advertising by the VMRO-DPMNE/LP coalition. The building of the cross was substantially financed by government agencies. The Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM) and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) ran coalition lists under the name "For Macedonia Together" with a number of small parties. Their campaign focused on economic issues, in particular unemployment and corruption, and accusations against the Government in relation to its role in the 2001 crisis.

The platforms of ethnic Albanian parties were focused on the improvement of ethnic Albanian rights, mainly through the implementation of the OFA. The established ethnic Albanian parties, the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA) and Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP), competed with two newcomers, the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) under former National Liberation Army (NLA) commander Ali Ahmeti and the programmatically more radical National Democratic Party (NDP). The DUI's rallies blended the profile of the party as a new element with imagery of the NLA. The DPA highlighted its role in the government, while at the same time presenting itself as a radical alternative. Attempts to create pre-electoral coalitions among ethnic Albanian parties failed, but no potential combination for post-electoral alliances was excluded.

The election campaign period was marred at times by violent incident, including:

- The killing of two ethnic Macedonian police officers on 26 August, and the killing of an ethnic Albanian police officer on 12 September;
- The shooting incident on the eve of election day in Celopek in which police officers were again targeted;
- The taking of five ethnic Macedonian hostages on the highway between Tetovo and Gostivar on 29 August. They were released on 31 August;
- Attacks with explosives on DUI offices in Skopje on 27 August, 28 August, and 2 September, and on a NDP office in Skopje on 27 August;

- The destruction with an incendiary device on 10 September of the car of journalist Ljupco Palevski, who had published an article the same day alleging that the government planned to use the MoI's special forces, the "Lions", to disrupt the election process;
- The attempt on 8 September by formations of former members of MoI special forces to prevent access to an SDSM rally in Prilep. The obstruction ended after some hours. The previous night, some of the same persons physically attacked the leading candidate of the SDSM list running in the district;
- Numerous acts of vandalism were committed against offices of various parties throughout the campaign period; and
- On numerous occasions, road blocks were erected by ethnic Albanians between Tetovo and Kicevo, in connection with political demands not necessarily related to the election campaign.

Actions by the authorities also contributed to the heightened tensions during the campaign:

- During the campaign, the Minister of the Interior repeatedly called for the arrest of Mr. Ali Ahmeti based on a war crimes-related arrest warrant, should he try to attend campaign rallies in Skopje. Due to this arrest warrant, Mr. Ahmeti was effectively prevented from attending DUI campaign rallies in Skopje and a DUI rally on 13 September in Skopje was cancelled.
- The president of the New Democracy party, who headed the party's list in the third election district, was investigated during the campaign period for alleged tax evasion by his company the previous year. Various stages of this investigation were widely publicized through State media;
- On 5 September, the MoI announced that it would file criminal charges against journalists who "diminish the reputation of the government"; and
- On 6 September, the MoI announced that it would press charges against three persons, including a former Minister of Defense and SDSM candidate Vlado Buckovski, for misappropriation of funds.

Violent incidents linked to the elections, threats against media and their representatives, and apparently selective application of law enforcement proceedings against candidates have no place in a democratic electoral process.

The Media

The laws and regulations on equal access to media and on freedom of expression generally comply with international standards and OSCE commitments. The media provided considerable information on election issues and political activities. There was a reasonable degree of differentiation among media outlets, presenting various cultural and political viewpoints, helping to enable voters to make an informed choice.

However, freedom of the media from coercion was not always respected. On 10 September, the publishing house of Global, an opposition bilingual newspaper, was attacked by armed activists, causing minor damage. Earlier the same day, the editor and circulation manager of Global had received telephone threats for publishing an article the same day denouncing the MoI's special

forces, the “Lions”. The same day, the editor’s car was destroyed with an incendiary device. On 4 September, the MoI had issued an announcement informing the public that “certain individuals [were] ... preparing scenarios which would damage the reputation of the current government in the pre-election period.” The announcement further warned that “the MoI will press charges against the editors-in-chief of the media that would publish (broadcast) such scenarios.”

With respect to the media’s coverage of the campaign, the public broadcaster Macedonian Radio and Television (MRTV), as in previous elections, failed to provide balanced coverage of parties’ activities during the campaign. Despite specific obligations of public service, *MTVI* carried extensive coverage of Government officials and the ruling parties during the entire election campaign. In the news programs broadcast from 18:00 to 24:00, for example, 56% of time devoted to politics covered the Government or the activities of the VMRO-DPMNE/LP coalition, often including speeches of politicians. This coverage was generally positive. By contrast, the SDSM-led coalition For Macedonia Together received just 12% of news airtime, mostly neutral.

The private TV station *Sitel* maintained a partisan attitude, largely favoring the Socialist Party of Macedonia, which obtained 47% of airtime in its news coverage, mostly positive. However, the private station *AI* showed a more balanced attitude than its competitors, although with more critical stories on ruling parties.

The print media offered various political orientations. The State owned daily *Nova Makedonija* mainly supported the Government and ruling parties with 52% of its space providing mostly positive coverage. The daily *Dnevnik* focused its coverage mainly on the two biggest coalitions, VMRO-DPMNE/LP 31% and For Macedonia Together 28%, both presented in a balanced manner. *Utrinski Vesnik* presented critical stories about the Government and the ruling parties. The Albanian language newspaper *Fakti* focused on the four main ethnic Albanian parties.

According to the Broadcasting Council of the Republic of Macedonia, several media outlets violated the Rules for Equal Access to Media Presentation developed by the Council and enacted by Parliament. The rules prohibit exceeding the limits on duration of paid political advertising, broadcasting unmarked paid programs, and airing non-election related TV programs including candidates. Some political parties claimed, and filed complaints with the Council, that some media did not provide airtime for paid political advertising under equal conditions and manner of payment, as required by the Rules.

At the regional level, some radio stations were closed down, their concessions withdrawn or allocated frequency reassigned. Complaints were filed by Radio Tumba in Kumanovo, Radio Pink in Delcevo, and Radio Bitola. These measures were questionable in terms of their timing and selectiveness shortly before the election.

The media generally respected the 24-hour election campaign silence period. However, a few local TV stations, including *Television 4* and *Telma TV* in Skopje, and *Radio Bitola* and *TV Meti* in Bitola, breached this obligation.

Election Disputes

Relatively few election complaints were submitted prior to election day. One complaint regarding the registration of a candidate list was described above. Two other complaints are also noteworthy.

Shortly before the election, the head of a domestic NGO, Macedonian Helsinki Committee claimed that the Minister of the Interior should not be a candidate while continuing to perform his official duties. The claim was based on a provision of the Parliamentary Election Law and also the 1995 Law on Internal Affairs. The SEC was not required to consider a complaint from a private organization, but issued a statement indicating that it was for the competent authorities to clarify the status of State officials. No further complaints were filed on the matter.

Another complaint was submitted to the Constitutional Court, outside the regular election complaint procedure. This action was brought by the Democratic Alternative (DA) party concerning the appointment of members to election commissions. The DA argued that the provision regarding the selection of parties for election body membership, as provided for in a transitional article in the Parliamentary Election Law, contained a drafting error relating to parties that contested the previous election jointly in a coalition. The complaint is still under consideration.

Participation of Minorities

The precise ethnic composition of the country is disputed and will not be known until a census planned later this year. Minorities include Albanians, Turks, Serbs, Roma, Bosniacs and Vlachs. Party competition takes place largely within ethnic communities, with few parties adopting non-ethnic, civic platforms. Most minorities were represented by at least two or more parties, which demonstrated plurality, but reduced electoral impact.

Some smaller minority parties joined the SDSM-led coalition For Macedonia Together, which included parties from the Roma, Bosniac, Vlach, Turk and Serb communities. Some minority representatives were placed in promising positions on candidate lists, and accordingly minority representation is likely to increase in the new Parliament. Another coalition list of smaller parties also included parties representing Serbs, Vlachs, Muslims and Egyptians. Overall, the new electoral system favors minority representation.

Gender Issues

All list submitters complied with the Parliamentary Election Law, which required that at least 30% of the candidates on lists be of each gender. In fact, 32.1% of candidates were women, but they were generally not in promising positions on the lists. Six women were in the lead position on a list, and only 4.53% of candidates in the first five positions were women.

The membership of women in election commissions was also low. The President of the SEC was a woman, but only one other SEC member (a party representative) out of eight was female.

On the RECs and MECs fewer than 30% of members were women, and most of those were deputies and not full members.

Domestic Observers

A number of domestic organizations deployed non-partisan observers for the election. The NGO "MOST" deployed the largest contingent with some 3,000 observers. Smaller groups of observers were deployed by the NGO "C4C" (Citizens for Citizens) and the Macedonian Helsinki Committee.

Election Day & Vote Count

Election day was characterized by a high turnout of voters (more than 70%), relatively few incidents of violence, and in general an orderly process. International observers paying some 3,600 visits to about 2,500 polling stations throughout the country reported a "poor" conduct of the polling for only 2.8% of their visits.

Measures to safeguard the integrity of voting were implemented properly in most cases. In 93% of observations, voters were properly checked for indelible ink and asked to sign the voter list, and in 93% of observations voters were marked with indelible ink. Some voters were turned away properly when they could not produce a valid ID, their name was not on the voter list, or they refused to have the indelible ink checked on their index finger. However, "family"/proxy voting was observed in 20% of visits, violating the secrecy of voting.

Campaign materials within 100 meters of polling stations were observed in 15% of visits and inside polling stations in only 1% of visits. Significantly, campaign activities were noted in only 1% of visits inside or within 100 meters of polling stations. Unauthorized persons were noted in polling stations during relatively few visits, including police in less than 1% of visits, local administration officials in 0.3% of visits, and party supporters in 1.6% of the visits. In very few of such cases (2%), these unauthorized individuals were interfering with the work of Election Boards.

During 6% of visits, tension or disturbances were noted in polling stations, including armed civilians identified as "Lions" threatening PB members in Lesok, a large number of "Lions" at five polling stations in Volkovina near Gostivar, party activists shooting in the air near Lipkovo, teenage party activists obstructing the entrance to a polling station in Velgoshti, a Deputy MoI intimidating voters in Gostivar, ballot boxes stolen from polling station in Lesok and polling suspended, and polling interrupted in polling station near Gostivar because of threats.

Domestic non-partisan observers were noted during 44% of visits to polling stations, predominantly from the NGO MOST. Partisan observers for parties, coalitions and independent candidates were seen in almost all visits.

Vote count was evaluated as "poor" in only 7% of 350 polling stations observed, and significant problems noted in 3%. Generally, procedures devised to ensure the integrity of the count were observed, unauthorized police were noted inside polling stations in very few cases (0.3%) and other unauthorized persons in 5%. Such unauthorized police or persons were interfering in the

proceedings in 3% of cases, and disturbance or tension was noted outside polling stations in 6% of the observations. Domestic observers were noted in 41% of polling stations where the vote count was observed. Significantly in an overwhelming majority of cases observed (99%), the vote count was completed without undue delays and no incidents were reported during the transported of the results to the MECs.

*This statement is available in the English and Macedonian languages.
However, the English text is the only official version.*

MISSION INFORMATION & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Mr. Kimmo Kiljunen, Vice-president of the OSCE PA was appointed Special Coordinator of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office for the election in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Mr. Bjorn von der Esch, Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), led the PACE delegation, and Mr. Andreas Gross, Vice President of PACE, was the rapporteur of the delegation. Mrs. Doris Pack, Chairperson of the Delegation for Relations with South-east Europe of the European Parliament (EP), led the EP delegation. Mr. Julian Peel Yates headed the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission.

The OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission (EOM) was established in Skopje on 22 July and shortly thereafter started monitoring the electoral process with 54 experts, long-term and mid-term observers deployed in the capital and eleven regional centers.

On election day, the International Election Observation Mission deployed around 869 observers from 41 OSCE participating States, including 86 observers seconded by the European Commission, 39 parliamentarians from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, 16 from the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, and five from the European Parliament. In addition, representatives of embassies in Skopje of OSCE participating states and of international organizations and non-governmental organizations contributed short-term observers to the IEOM. On election day, observers paid some 3,600 visits to about 2,500 polling stations out of the 2,973 throughout the country.

The OSCE/ODIHR will issue a comprehensive report on this election approximately one month after the completion of the process.

The IEOM wishes to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the State Election Commission, and other national and local authorities for their assistance and cooperation during the course of the observation. The IEOM also wishes to express appreciation to the OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje, the NATO Amber Fox and Task Force Fox, the Council of Europe Information Office in Skopje, as well as other international organizations and embassies accredited in Skopje for their support throughout the duration of the mission.

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