

# Press Release

## Communication Unit of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

Ref:696a08

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### Local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Good democratic effort but low voter turnout

Sarajevo, 06.10.2008 – Municipal elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina on 5 October 2008 were generally in line with democratic standards but marred by low voter turnout especially in major cities throughout the country and by ethnic division.

The elections were technically well organised and the training provided by the Central Electoral Commission in cooperation with the Council of Europe proved useful for all members of the local polling stations.

This was a preliminary conclusion of the delegation of the Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, which also included four members of the EU Committee of the Regions. On 5 October, the delegation observed the voting and ballot counting in approximately 120 polling stations in Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Mostar, Srebrenica, Brcko, Zvornik, Pale and Bratunac.

The observers acknowledged the improvements made since the previous elections, including amendments to the Electoral Law providing for minority representation and special voter registration rules for former residents of Srebrenica. They also welcomed the fact that these elections were fully funded by national authorities.

However, the elections and especially the preceding campaign were stained by allegations of bribery, rhetoric fuelling ethnic division and by voter apathy, resulting in low voter turnout on election day. This could be due to the fact that political debate during the campaign did not address the issues of concern to the citizens.

During the Autumn Session of the Congress (2 December 2008), the Head of the delegation, Marie-Rose Koro (France, SOC) will present all the findings of the mission.

The Congress encourages the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to implement its recommendations for further improvement of local democracy in the country.

#### Members of the delegation:

- Ms Marie-Rose Koro, Congress (France, SOC) – Head of delegation and Rapporteur
- Mr Mamuka Abuladze, Congress (Georgia, ILDG)
- Mr Mihkel Juhkami, Congress (Estonia, EPP/CD)
- Mr Mehboob Khan, Congress (United Kingdom, SOC)
- Ms Amy Koopmanschap, Congress (Netherlands, SOC)
- Mr Nigel Mermagen, Congress (United Kingdom, ILDG)
- Mr Jens Nilsson, Congress (Sweden, SOC)
- Ms Hana Richtermocova, Congress (Czech Republic, NR)
- Mr Taner Ali, Congress (Bulgaria, ILDG)

#### EU Committee of the Regions:

- Mr Martin Heatley (UK/EPP), Member of Warwickshire County Council
- Mr Joseph Cordina (MT/PES), Mayor of Xaghra
- Ms Doreen Huddart (UK/ALDE), Member of Newcastle-upon-Tyne City Council
- Mr Jerzy Zajakala (PL/UEN-EA), Mayor of Ljubjanka

The Congress has two chambers, the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions.

It brings together 318 full and 318 substitute members representing more than 200 000 European territorial communities.

President of the Congress : Yavuz Milden (Turkey, EPP/CD), President of the Chamber of Regions: Ludmila Sfirloaga (Romania, SOC),

President of the Chamber of Local Authorities : Ian Micallef (Malta, EPP/CD).

Political Groups : Socialist Group (**SOC**), Group of the European People's Party – Christian Democrats (**EPP/CD**),  
Independent and Liberal Democrat Group (**ILDG**).

**Congress Secretariat**

- Mr Jean-Philippe Bozouls, Executive Secretary of the Chamber of local authorities
- Ms Lilit Nikoghosyan, Co-Secretary of the Institutional Committee
- Ms Gönül Koçak, Secretariat

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