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Moldova's local elections largely met international standards, but remaining legal and regulatory issues need to be considered, observers say

Chisinau, 6 June 2011 –Moldova's local elections largely met OSCE and Council of Europe election-related commitments, in conditions conducive to a competitive campaign and offering voters a genuine choice, international observers from the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities concluded in a statement issued today.

However, the observers noted that remaining legal, administrative and regulatory issues need to be further considered in order to ensure continued forward progress.

"Electoral participants noted much more equitable opportunities to reach voters as part of a competitive campaign, but improvements in the regulation of political financing would further benefit the electoral process," said Gerald Mitchell, the Head of the OSCE/ODIHR Limited Election Observation Mission. "A more concerted effort to introduce a centralized electronic voter register would also further improve the process."

"Voters in this election clearly benefitted from a wide range of options," said Britt Marie Lövgren, the Head of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities delegation. "But the competencies of local authorities in election administration need to be clearer. If they are in charge of important aspects of election administration, this must be clear in law and they must be given the necessary resources."

The observers found that the candidate registration process was inclusive and provided voters with a genuine choice. Media covered the election campaign through a variety of formats, including editorial broadcasts, debates and paid advertising, offering voters a broad range of information about contestants and their programmes.

The legal framework provides a sound basis for the conduct of democratic elections, and the election administration performed in a transparent and professional manner overall, perceived as impartial by the majority of stakeholders.

However, the postponement of the introduction of a centralized electronic voter register meant that voter lists were again prepared by local authorities. As in previous elections, this resulted in concerns over their accuracy. The ongoing problem of unclear residency provisions to designate proper place of voting underscored these difficulties.

Also, mechanisms for the oversight of political financing are insufficiently developed and lacking in precision and adequate enforcement. A lack of clarity over the division of competencies among different levels and bodies of government also raised concerns over the provision of clear and sufficient funding to allow them to carry out their respective

tasks.

Election day procedures, including voting and counting, proceeded calmly and were conducted in a generally orderly and transparent manner.

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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: Keith Whitmore (United Kingdom, ILDG), President of the Chamber of Regions: Herwig van Staa (Austria, EPP/CD), President of the Chamber of Local Authorities: Jean-Paul Frécon (France, SOC)

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