

Press Release

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Montenegro: Statement by the PACE pre-election delegation

Strasbourg, 25.02.2009 - The pre-election delegation¹ of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) took note of the preparations underway for the upcoming early parliamentary elections in Montenegro, to be held on 29 March 2009.

The delegation concluded that, with the necessary political will, Montenegro was capable of holding elections in line with European standards, despite the discrepancies that remain between the Constitution and the electoral legislation. It noted that the election administration demonstrates efficiency and represents a plurality of political views. The delegation was pleased with the active involvement of civil society and the print media in the process and praised the quality of their work.

At the same time, the delegation was concerned over the fact that the Montenegrin authorities have not taken corrective action in line with recommendations made by PACE and other international observers in the wake of elections held in the country earlier. This concerns, in particular, the continuing possibility of changes to fifty percent of the order of the candidates on proportional lists after the closure of the polls, which contravenes Council of Europe standards in respect of democratic elections and the principles of parliamentary democracy. This possibility needs to be expressly prohibited by the election law. The delegation welcomed the assurances it received from the Speaker of the Parliament that this concern will be duly addressed when the relevant legislation is revised. Another concern relates to a rather vague constitutional provision regarding authentic representation for people belonging to national minorities. Montenegro would be well advised to work on these legal issues with the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe.

The delegation was in Montenegro from 23 to 25 February 2009 to assess the political situation ahead of, and the state of preparations for, the 29 March 2009 elections in Montenegro. It is part of a twenty member PACE observer delegation that will arrive in Montenegro closer to the voting day at the invitation of the Speaker of the Parliament of Montenegro.

¹ Andreas Gross (Switzerland, SOC), Head of delegation, Jean-Charles Gardetto (Monaco, EPP/CD), Andrej Zernovski («The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia», ALDE), Øyvind Vaksdal (Norway, EDG).