

Progress on election day, but some problems remain, observers in Skopje say

Strasbourg, 06.04.2009 – The second round of the presidential and municipal elections in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” on Sunday met most OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and standards for democratic elections, although some of the issues identified in the first round, including credible reports of intimidation, were of increased concern, international election observers said in a statement released today.

“We were pleased to see a peaceful environment and a well administered election day, although some aspects of the campaign period seriously detracted from the overall quality of the election process,” said Peter Eicher, Head of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission.

“The voting process was significantly improved from the parliamentary elections in 2008,” said Jørgen Poulsen, Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. “The president and the majority party now have to live up to their responsibility to create a political process that is inclusive and to remedy the remaining issues outstanding in the election process.”

In the pre-election period for the second round, most candidates and parties expressed their continued commitment to ensuring a calm and democratic election. Despite some tensions, especially in tight mayoral races, the situation remained peaceful throughout the campaign period. Nonetheless, the reports of pressure on and intimidation of voters, continued to cloud the generally positive assessment of the election observation mission.

The voting process generally went smoothly, although there were some procedural irregularities. Family voting remained a problem, but was significantly reduced in the second round. The lower voter turnout figures for the presidential election demonstrated the danger that the 40 percent turnout requirement could lead to failed elections in the future, particularly when combined with problems with the voters list.

The OSCE Office for Human Rights and Democratic Institutions (OSCE/ODIHR), which deployed 170 observers from 30 countries for the second round of elections, including 40 long-term observers and analysts and 132 short-term observers, issued a joint statement Monday with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, which designated Jørgen Poulsen to represent the Assembly for the second round of the presidential election

For further information contact:

- Thomas Rymer, OSCE/ODIHR, (+48 609 522 266); or Mr. Drew Hyslop, OSCE/ODIHR Election Adviser, in Warsaw (+48 22 520 0600);
- Artemy Karpenko, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, (+33 671 152 911).