

Bulgarian elections generally in line with standards, but more efforts needed to ensure integrity of process

Sofia, 06.07.2009 – Yesterday's parliamentary elections in Bulgaria were generally in accordance with international standards, but further efforts are necessary to ensure the integrity of the election process and increase public confidence, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) concluded in a joint statement released today.

The observers noted that the elections provided voters a broad choice in a visible and active election campaign demonstrating respect for fundamental freedoms. But late changes to the election system, concerns about the effectiveness of law enforcement and the judiciary, as well as pervasive and persistent allegations of vote-buying, negatively affected the election environment.

"These elections were competitive and generally well run. But concrete measures are now needed to ensure full public confidence in the process, and particularly to eliminate electoral malpractices and strengthen the legal system," said Ambassador Colin Munro, Head of the OSCE/ODIHR limited election observation mission.

"Despite grave imperfections linked to last minute changes in the electoral legislation and repeated allegations of vote buying that surrounded the 5 July elections, I am hopeful that Bulgaria will put the existing problems to rest and will fully justify its membership in the community of democratic values," said Tadeusz Iwinski, Head of the PACE delegation.

The observers said election day overall appeared to proceed in a calm and orderly manner, although there were reported cases of attempted fraud involving absentee voting.

The full statement of preliminary findings and conclusions is available on the OSCE website at www.osce.org/odihr and the PACE website at <http://assembly.coe.int/>

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