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## **Parliamentary elections in Turkey: statement by the PACE pre-electoral delegation**

Strasbourg, 18.05.2011 – A four-member,<sup>1</sup> cross-party delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) making a pre-electoral visit to Turkey ahead of the 12 June parliamentary elections has welcomed the sound economic progress achieved in Turkey since the 2007 parliamentary elections.

"There is a vibrant civil society in the country and, in a welcome development – since electronic media can now broadcast in languages other than Turkish only – campaigning is now allowed in those languages as well. The Supreme Board of Elections (SBE) is acting in an efficient and transparent manner and, seemingly, in full compliance with the letter of the law. Some legislative amendments introduced since 2007, albeit not yet all-encompassing, have paved the way for a better and more transparent electoral process.

At the same time the media, while generally believed to be free, are reportedly applying self-censorship for fear of falling victim to a broad interpretation of the anti-terrorist legislation. The candidate registration process, even though carried out in accordance with the letter of the existing legislation, has resulted in a situation where a number of candidates were initially denied registration, a decision promptly reversed by the SBE with regard to some of those candidates after a public uproar. This is a clear indication that the relevant legal basis is in need of further improvements. In addition, the application of the relevant legislation must be carried out in good faith.

Reports of growing tension, violence, harassment, imprisonment and detention of Kurdish opposition supporters, including elected officials, and a loss of life in the east and south-east of the country give rise to grave concerns. We call upon all political stakeholders to refrain from acts of violence.

Overall, it is widely believed that while the elections will be free, their fairness is open to improvement, not least given the unequal conditions for the contenders.

In this regard, the ten per cent threshold, by far the highest among the Council of Europe member states, remains the central issue that limits the representative nature of the legislature.

We expect Turkey to take corrective action and stand ready to extend assistance as needed. We hope that the forthcoming 12 June elections will be held democratically, in an orderly, peaceful and non-violent environment."

The delegation was in Ankara from 17 to 18 May 2011 at the invitation of the Turkish delegation to PACE. It held meetings with the Chairman of the SBE, representatives of political parties running in this election and the EU Ambassador to Turkey, as well as a representative cross-section of civil society and the media. PACE observers will return to the country with a 30-member delegation to observe the 12 June elections."

1. Kerstin Lundgren (Sweden, ALDE), head of the delegation, Latchezar Toshev (Bulgaria, EPP/CD), Arcadio Díaz Tejera (Spain, SOC), and Andrej Hunko (Germany, UEL).



The Assembly brings together 318 members from the national parliaments of the 47 member states.  
President: Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu (Turkey, EPP) - Secretary General of the Assembly: Wojciech Sawicki.  
Political groups: EPP/CD (Group of the European People's Party); SOC (Socialist Group);  
EDG (European Democrat Group); ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe);  
UEL (Group of the Unified European Left).