

Press Release

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Council of Europe Congress to observe local elections in Azerbaijan

Strasbourg, 16.12.2004 – A ten-member delegation of the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities will observe the local elections to be held in Azerbaijan on 17 December, at the invitation of the chairman of the country's Central Electoral Commission, Mazahir Panahov.

The Congress delegation (*) - led by Wim Van Gelder (EPP/CD, Chamber of Regions, Netherlands) - arrived in the country on 13 December to meet the main candidates, NGO representatives and various other prominent figures.

Particular attention will be paid to the electoral campaign, the implementation of existing legislation, the media situation and the work of the Central Electoral Commission and relevant public authorities. On election day, the members of the delegation will be deployed throughout the country.

In a statement adopted on 10 December, the Bureau of the Congress called on the Azeri authorities to conform with the Council of Europe's democratic standards, in particular the European Charter of Self-Government. The statement also urged the opposition parties not to boycott the elections.

A **press conference** will be held at **2 pm on 18 December** at the Council of Europe Information Office in Baku (39-41 Boyuk Gala Kuchasi, Icheri Sheher, tel. + 994 12 497 54 93).

(*) The other members of the delegation are: Sean O'Brien (SOC, L, Ireland), Fabio Pellegrini (SOC, L, Italy), Jean-Claude Frecon (SOC, L, France), Mohammad Nazir (SOC, R, United Kingdom), Joseph Borg (EPP/CD, R, Malte), Brith Fäldt (SOC, L, Sweden), Christopher Newbury (EPP/CD, L, United Kingdom), Bernard Suaud (ILDG, France) and Omur Aybar (Turkey).

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