

Press Release

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Parliamentary Elections in Bulgaria (5 July 2009): Assembly Bureau concerned over Sofia's lack of cooperation

Strasbourg, 22.06.2009 - The Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), meeting in Strasbourg today, expressed its disappointment that the competent authorities of Bulgaria had until now failed to issue an invitation for PACE to observe the forthcoming parliamentary elections of 5 July 2009 and considered this to be a clear case of lack of cooperation with PACE.

The Bureau recalls that Bulgaria is subject to a post-monitoring dialogue and that, in accordance with the existing rules, the Bureau decided, on 27 April 2009, to observe the 5 July elections and set up a twenty member ad hoc committee for that purpose, a decision on which the Bulgarian side was fully aware. The Bureau considers that the non-issuance of a timely invitation is indicative of Bulgaria's unwillingness to subject the functioning of its democracy to international scrutiny at such an important juncture.

The Bureau recalled that, under the existing rules, observation of elections and referenda on a national level is an inalienable right of the Assembly. A State's lack of cooperation or its refusal to accept a PACE election observation mission should give rise to a debate at the part-session or the Standing Committee meeting following the elections in question. The debate may result in sanctions that could include the challenge of credentials of the national delegation concerned on the basis of Rule 8.2.b (lack of cooperation under the Assembly's monitoring procedure).

The Bureau decided to refer the matter to the Monitoring Committee in the context of its on-going post-monitoring dialogue, with a view to a possible debate at the October Part-Session, as foreseen in the rules.

The Parliamentary Assembly brings together 318 members from the national parliaments of the 47 member states.

President: Lluís Maria de Puig (Spain, SOC) – Secretary General of the Assembly: Mateo Sorinas.

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).