



Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS
12 October 2003

OSCE/ODIHR NEEDS ASSESSMENT MISSION
REPORT

11-16 JULY 2003



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REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS 12 OCTOBER 2003

OSCE/ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission Report

I. INTRODUCTION

In anticipation of an invitation from the authorities to observe the local government elections scheduled for 12 October 2003, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) undertook a Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) to the Republic of Albania between 11-16 July 2003. The NAM took place in the context of a visit by ODIHR Director, Ambassador Christian Strohal. He was joined by Marcus Brand, Special Adviser, as well as Andrew Bruce, Election Adviser, who undertook additional meetings after the ODIHR Director's visit had ended.

The purpose of the NAM was to assess the conditions and level of preparation for the elections, in line with OSCE commitments, and to advise on the establishment of an Election Observation Mission (EOM).

The NAM held meetings in Tirana with representatives of the authorities, election administration, political parties, media, civil society and international community (see annex for list of meetings). The OSCE/ODIHR is grateful to the OSCE Presence in Albania and the Albanian authorities for the assistance provided during the NAM.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The local government elections scheduled for 12 October 2003 provide an important opportunity for Albania to make significant progress towards compliance with international commitments and standards for democratic elections.

Recent elections have seen progress in the conduct of the campaign, media and election administration, but have remained problematic, particularly in regard to the lack of effective legal redress. Significant improvement in the conduct and contest of the local government elections will have a major impact on the European Union Stabilization and Association process, which began on 31 January 2003.

The elections, for 65 municipal councils and mayors, 309 commune councils and mayors and 11 councils and mayors for municipal sub-units of the metropolitan city of Tirana, will be held in a political environment considerably improved since the last local government elections in 2000 and parliamentary elections in 2001.

A period of consensus between the Socialist Party (SP) and Democratic Party (DP) during the second half of 2002 saw the election of a new President of the Republic and accompanied key phases of the work of the bi-partisan parliamentary committee, established to address concerns arising from the 2001 parliamentary elections. The

committee met for a year and by April 2003 had successfully addressed most of the recommendations contained in the ODIHR Final Report on the 2001 elections.

The local government elections will be held under a new Electoral Code, adopted by the Assembly on 19 June 2003 on the basis of amendments agreed consensually by the bi-partisan committee and two protocols signed by the SP and DP. The new Code includes improvements in a number of important areas, in particular voter lists and the complaints and appeals process, and has been publicly welcomed by both the SP and DP, ending a seven year period of contest over electoral legislation. Significantly for the local government elections, the election system for electing mayors has been changed to a one round majoritarian system.

Preparations for the elections are well underway, and all recommendations from the ODIHR Final Report on the 2001 elections relating to the election administration have either been addressed, or are in the process of being addressed. Significantly, the new Electoral Code contains new selection and decision-making procedures for the CEC and lower level commissions. In an encouraging development, problems in the appointment of a new CEC member by the Assembly were resolved as a result of political will on both sides of the political spectrum. It is now essential that this positive approach extends to the functioning of election commissions at all levels.

In a worrying development, a number of interlocutors raised concerns about government intervention in the media since the last elections. The authorities have increasingly chosen to advertise with supportive media and private businesses are reportedly fearful of advertising with anti-government media lest they risk financial inspections. As a result, it appears that a majority of media outlets have become openly pro-government in their reporting.

In its final report on the 2001 parliamentary elections, the ODIHR noted that more political will was required for the elections to fully meet international standards. In the past year, both sides of the political spectrum demonstrated considerable political will to improve the framework for elections. It is now essential that this results in significant improvement in the conduct and contest of the upcoming elections, particularly in the performance of the election administration, the judiciary, and the attitudes of the political parties in treating each other as legitimate political opponents.

The NAM recommends that a standard EOM be deployed to Albania to assess the local government elections in line with OSCE commitments. The OSCE/ODIHR should request from participating States the secondment of 18 long-term observers and 250 short-term observers.

III. FINDINGS

A. POLITICAL CONTEXT

Since the introduction of pluralism in 1991, five general elections and three local government elections have been held in Albania. These were marked by a polarized political culture, with deep antagonisms between political forces grouped around the

dominant Socialist and Democratic parties, their fortunes shifting from one election to another.

Following a period of DP dominance between 1992 and 1997, the SP came to power at the national level at the 1997 parliamentary elections. Subsequently, at the local government elections in 2000, the SP won 44% of the proportional vote, 258 mayors (67%) and 43% of councilors; the DP won 34% of the proportional vote, 93 mayors (24%) and 32% of councilors; and other parties obtained 22% of the proportional vote, 32 mayors (9%) and 25% of councilors. The SP remained in power at the national level following victory at the 2001 parliamentary elections. Following the 2000 local government elections, the DP and its allies boycotted a number of local bodies where it considered the results to be fraudulent. After the parliamentary elections, the DP and its allies boycotted the Assembly.

The ODIHR assessed that both the 2000 local government elections and the 2001 parliamentary elections marked progress, in particular with regard to the campaign, which was much more peaceful than during previous elections, and media coverage. The 2001 elections also saw improvement in the performance of the election administration. However, significant shortcomings remained, in particular with regard to provision by the election administration and judiciary of an effective means of redress. In its final report on the 2001 elections, the ODIHR considered that the SP victory was not disputed, only the extent of its victory came under question. It suggested that a bi-partisan parliamentary committee be established to investigate concerns surrounding the elections, identify political remedies, review the electoral framework and address ODIHR recommendations.

Following the 2001 elections, the country entered an uncertain political period, caused by divisions within the SP, which ultimately resulted in the fall of the government headed by Ilir Meta in January 2002, and the boycott of the Assembly by the DP and its allies. The DP ended its boycott at the end of January and Meta, who had served as Prime Minister since 1999, was replaced by Pandeli Majko. This period of uncertainty severely hampered the development of the country's weak institutions and delayed the establishment of the bi-partisan committee.

During the first months of 2002, the political situation started to improve and on 5 April an SP-DP protocol was brokered by the OSCE Presence to establish the bi-partisan committee. The committee held its first meeting on 28 May. The climate further improved in June with the consensual election, by the Assembly, of Alfred Moisiu as President of the Republic, made possible by an agreement between the Chairmen of the Socialist and Democratic Parties, Fatos Nano and Dr. Sali Berisha. In July, the DP ended its boycott of municipal and commune councils and in August Fatos Nano took over as Prime Minister.

A period of consensus continued until the end of the year, offering opportunity for progress on a number of issues that had stalled due to the long-standing political confrontation between the two main parties. Significantly, in October, the EU agreed to open talks on a Stabilization and Association Agreement as a first step towards EU membership. Negotiations opened on 31 January 2003. Under the agreement, significant progress is required in institutional reform, combating organised crime and corruption and strengthening government at both central and local levels.

Together with the positive influence of the bi-partisan committee, the six-month period of consensus contributed a positive dynamic to Albanian politics, and communication was opened at a variety of levels across party structures. The Assembly has taken on special significance as the main arena where the opposition has a voice in the policy-making process, and as a result has become a major focus of attention, regularly receiving wide media coverage.

As a result of the building pressures of the pre-election campaign, the agreement between the SP and DP leaders broke down at the beginning of 2003. However, the opposition remained fully engaged in the political process, in particular the work of the bi-partisan committee, which by April, had succeeded in addressing most of the recommendations in the ODIHR Final Report on the 2001 elections and agreeing changes to the Electoral Code.

In July, the SP and DP began negotiations with the smaller political parties to see whether alliances could be formed to contest the local government elections. However, by the end of August this had resulted in few agreements. On the governing side, the Social Democratic Party, Social Democracy Party¹ and Human Rights Union Party have all stated that they will contest the elections separately, while some local level agreements have been reached between the SP and the Agrarian Party and the Democratic Alliance Party.²

On the opposition side, no agreement has been reached between the DP and the New Democrat Party, the Legality Movement Party and the National Front Party, which have all declared that they will contest the elections independently. Agreements with Republican Party, Liberal Democrat Union Party and the breakaway faction of the Democratic Alliance Party are expected. The Christian Democrat Party has declared that it will run independently.

It is essential for the Stabilization and Association process that the elections see significant progress towards compliance with OSCE commitments and international standards for democratic elections. Both the authorities and political parties have publicly expressed a strong desire to see this happen, and the DP has expressed the expectation that it will recognize and not contest the results. The President of the Republic has publicly stressed the importance of an election process conducted in a positive manner, and has initiated the development of a Code of Conduct to be signed by political parties in advance of the elections.

B. LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES TO BE ELECTED

The Albanian Constitution establishes municipalities, which are mainly cities and towns, and communes, which are, in general, rural villages, as the basic level of local government. Regions are established as a second level unit of local government. Recently, the Ministry of Local Government and Decentralization called for local

¹ The Social Democracy Party was formed recently after a split in the leadership of the Social Democratic Party.

² The Democratic Alliance Party recently split following a decision of part of its leadership to leave the ruling majority and join the opposition. A court decision authorised that the faction aligned with the ruling majority should retain the original name, initials and logo.

government units to be merged as a lack of capacity, especially at commune level, is causing delay in the decentralization process currently underway following adoption of the Law on the Organization and Functioning of Local Government in 2000.

On 12 October 2003, elections will be held for 65 municipal councils and mayors and 309 commune councils and mayors. In addition, elections will be held for councils and mayors of 11 municipal sub-units within the metropolitan city of Tirana. The number of council members to be elected varies depending on population, ranging from 13 in small communes to 55 for the Tirana metropolitan area. Elections will not be held for regional councils, as under the Constitution, these are composed of selected members of the municipal and commune councils and all mayors within their jurisdiction.

C. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The 2000 local government elections were governed by an Electoral Code adopted by the Assembly in May 2000, following multi-party roundtable discussions with the participation of international experts. The Code was used again for the 2001 parliamentary elections, following amendment in May 2001. While the Code provided a basis for democratic elections, subsequent challenges during both elections indicated the necessity for reform in a number of areas. In particular, the respective competencies of election commissions and courts needed clarification, along with the establishment of clear procedures and deadlines for consideration and adjudication of complaints and appeals. During both elections, the complaints and appeals procedure did not provide an effective means of redress.

The bi-partisan committee agreed amendments to the Electoral Code in a number of areas, including the role of police in the electoral process, state non-interference in the process, role of observers, registration of candidates and media coverage. Significantly, the amendments included changes to voter registration and the complaints and appeals process, two of the key problematic issues highlighted in the ODIHR Final Report on the 2001 elections. The complaints and appeals process was changed substantially to ensure that all complaints pass through the election administration structure before, if necessary, proceeding to court, and to remove the Constitutional Court and High Court from direct involvement in the process. An Electoral College at the Court of Appeals of Tirana has been established to judge all appeals of election administration decisions.

After the expiry of the committee's mandate, two protocols were signed by the SP and DP to address a number of outstanding issues. These included the selection and composition of the CEC and other election commissions, the criteria for zone boundaries in parliamentary elections, and the problem of pseudo-independent candidates, which was a major concern at the 2001 elections.

Significantly for the upcoming local government elections, the system for electing mayors of municipalities and communes was changed from a majoritarian system, requiring an absolute majority and providing for a second round run-off between the top two candidates if this was not achieved, to a one-round majoritarian system in which the candidate obtaining the largest number of votes is elected. No change was made to the system to elect councils, which is on the basis of multi-name lists

submitted by political parties, coalitions or independent candidacies. Mandates are allocated according to a proportional system.³

On 19 June 2003, the Assembly adopted a new Electoral Code, with 94 votes in favour, 10 more than the constitutional requirement of a 3/5 majority. Both the SP and DP voted in favour and publicly supported the new Code, ending a long period (beginning in 1996), during which electoral legislation was contested by the opposition. The DP, which had boycotted adoption of the 2000 Electoral Code has declared publicly that the new legislation is in line with international standards. The new Electoral Code came into force on 16 July 2003.

Representatives from the smaller political parties generally praised the work of the bi-partisan committee, but raised a number of concerns. Most of these were in regard to amendments to the Electoral Code emerging from the SP-DP protocols, some of which they consider to be unconstitutional. Particular concern was raised about the formation of election commissions, share of media coverage and the postponement of discussion on party and campaign financing until after the local government elections. A number of parties raised the possibility that the local government elections could be blocked as a result of decision-making requirements for election commissions being raised to require a qualified majority for a number of decisions.

Informal comment by an ODIHR expert on the amendments agreed by the bi-partisan committee raised concerns about the registration of coalitions and candidate lists of coalitions, media allocation, ballot design, and voting by disabled persons, but otherwise assessed that the amendments, when considered within the context of the entire Electoral Code, were consistent with OSCE commitments and international norms. However, the ODIHR expert expressed concern whether some of the proposed amendments were consistent with electoral principles stated in the Constitution of Albania.

Informal comment by the same expert raised more concerns about amendments agreed under the SP-DP protocols. These related in particular to decision making requirements for the CEC and lower level commissions, the CEC membership selection process, mandate allocation, criteria for establishing electoral zone boundaries and the lack of transitory provisions regarding CEC membership renewal.

The ODIHR will produce a detailed assessment of the new Electoral Code, in association with the Council of Europe - Venice Commission, after the local government elections. The ODIHR remains committed, together with the OSCE Presence, to provide assistance to further efforts to improve the electoral framework, specifically in the areas of election systems and party and campaign financing, which the SP and DP have formally committed to discuss after the local government elections.

³ Hare quota with largest remainder.

D. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The local government elections will be administered by a three-tier structure: the CEC, 385 Local Government Election Commissions (LGECS) and approximately 4,700 Voting Centre Commissions (VCCs).

As a result of the first SP-DP protocol, the new Electoral Code significantly changes the selection procedures for CEC members. The Constitution establishes that the CEC is composed of seven members, each with a seven year mandate. Two members are chosen by the Assembly, two by the President of the Republic and three by the High Council of Justice.

Under the old Electoral Code, these bodies were given wide discretion in selecting the members, with the aim of assuring an independent, non-political body. The new Electoral Code, however, gives full control of the proposing process to political parties, with the result that three members come from the two major parties/political groupings on the governing side, three come from the two major parties/political groupings on the opposition side and one member is consensually proposed by the major parties on the governing and opposition sides.⁴

Under the old Electoral Code, the mandates of three CEC members expired on 31 March 2003. As the new Code does not contain any transitory provisions to deal with their replacement, this led to opposition demands that the whole CEC should be “recomposed” to achieve the political balance required by the new Code. However, the appointing institutions – the Assembly, the President of the Republic and the High Council of Justice – chose to replace only the three members whose mandates had expired. Political will was demonstrated by parties on both sides of the political spectrum in the first two of these replacements, notably in the decision of the Prime Minister to convene an extraordinary session of the Assembly on 31 July to complete the election of the member proposed by the smaller opposition parties. The President of the Republic made his appointment the following day. The High Council of Justice has still to fill the third vacancy.

The new Electoral Code has also significantly changed the method for forming LGECS and VCCs.⁵ Under the old Code, one seat on both commissions was assigned to the top seven parties based on the results of the proportional vote in the respective municipality or commune in the previous local government elections. Under the new Code, two members each are assigned to the largest governing and opposition parliamentary parties and a third on each side is awarded to the party that placed second on each side according to the national aggregate proportional results at the last

⁴ The largest parliamentary parties on both the governing and opposition sides nominate candidates for the two members selected by the President of the Republic and two of the three members selected by the High Council of Justice. One member is chosen from each side by both the President and the High Council of Justice. The third member on each side is elected by the Assembly from proposals made by the parliamentary parties of each side, with the exclusion of the largest parliamentary party of that side. The seventh member (the third to be chosen by the High Council of Justice) is proposed consensually by both largest governing and opposition parties, and is designed to act as a balancing factor. A requirement for qualified majority (2/3) for important decisions is intended to further strengthen this balancing approach.

⁵ The new Electoral Code also changed the method for forming Zone Election Commission (ZECs), although these commissions will not be used during the local government elections.

local elections. In addition, the seventh member of each LGEC is assigned to the largest governing and opposition parliamentary parties on a fifty-fifty basis. A lottery was conducted by the CEC on 23 July to decide on the distribution of this position for LGECs throughout the country. The results were contested only by one small party. Assignment of the seventh member of each VCC corresponds with the assignment of the seventh member of the LGEC to which it is subordinate.

The election administration was heavily criticized by the ODIHR in its final report on the 2000 local government elections. The appointment of election commissions at all levels was contentious and some commission members used their position to obstruct the election administration. The CEC lacked transparency and independence and was hampered by under-staffing and inexperience. Training for lower level commissions was poor and steps were not taken to remedy administrative shortcomings apparent in the first round before the second round.

At the 2001 parliamentary elections, the CEC functioned with greater independence and transparency. Organization of the elections improved and some recommendations from the ODIHR Final Report on the 2000 local government elections were addressed, including the adoption of rules of procedure, re-organization of administrative departments and provision of better training to lower level commissions. However, at times, political pressure appeared to compromise the performance of the CEC, which failed to exercise its competency on a number of critical issues.

Since the 2001 parliamentary elections, the CEC has taken further steps to improve its performance, including the development and implementation of a strategic plan, structural reorganization and recruitment of new staff. Furthermore, the Chairman of the CEC, Ilirjan Celibashi, has expressed a strong commitment to improve the conduct of elections in line with OSCE commitments and international standards, in expectation of a successful process that is not contested by any political party. In this regard, it will be essential that political parties do not use amendments to the Electoral Code, particularly those requiring qualified majority voting by election commissions, to block the electoral process.

The authorities have released funds to cover the organization of the elections, including the purchase of new, more secure ballot boxes. For the first time ever, public funding for voter education and information has been allocated. Preparations for the elections are well underway, and thus far the CEC has generally met its own administrative deadlines.

All recommendations from the ODIHR Final Report on the 2001 parliamentary elections relating to the election administration have been, or are in the process of being addressed. This includes the introduction of a unique nation-wide system for numbering polling stations, better tabulation procedures and unique numbers on results protocols. Steps have been taken to ensure that election commissions will be better resourced than at previous elections, and a comprehensive training programme for LGEC members is underway. VCC members will be trained shortly before election day.

In a move towards increased transparency, a media centre will be established over the election day period where unofficial results will be announced as they are received. All decisions of the CEC and LGEC aggregated results will be posted on the CEC internet site <http://www.cec.org.al>

E. VOTER REGISTRATION

Voter registers have been a source of controversy at recent elections. To address this concern, in advance of the 2000 local government elections, the authorities, with the help of the international community, created a computerized national voter register run by the Ministry of Local Government. Further efforts to improve the register were made in advance of the 2001 parliamentary elections by the CEC, which was responsible for voter lists under the old Electoral Code. While these were significant steps towards European practices in ascertaining the eligibility of voters, shortcomings remained.

A key recommendation of the ODIHR Final Report on the 2001 parliamentary elections was that the accuracy of the voter register should be improved. The bi-partisan committee discussed the issue in some detail and decided that while the existing voter register should be used as the basis for the 2003 local government elections, civil registers should be the sole source for voter lists at the 2005 parliamentary elections. This was reflected in amendments to the Electoral Code. There was general agreement that while updating and cleaning of the 2001 voter register should continue, only limited improvement would be possible in advance of the 2003 local government elections.

The CEC has completed the process of updating the voter lists for the local government elections, and on 12 August unanimously approved the preliminary lists with the agreement of the DP representative to the CEC and the representatives of other parties. The preliminary lists contain approximately 2,600,000 names. A potential problem caused by the Assembly deleting transitory provisions in the new Electoral Code regarding preparation of the lists for the upcoming elections, was solved by a CEC instruction based on provisions of the old Code, before the new Code came into force. In an encouraging development, the representative of the DP to the CEC has been fully consulted on all issues relating to voter registration and has worked closely with the CEC in finding solutions to the on-going technical problems.

F. MEDIA

The media sector in Albania has changed rapidly in recent years, with the launch of many TV and radio stations. There are now approximately 60 TV stations and over 40 radio stations. Newspapers are less well developed and are only distributed in the cities. Television is the main source of news.

The 2000 local government elections and the 2001 parliamentary elections displayed positive developments for the media in Albania. At the local government elections, a broad range of media offered voters a wide range of information for the first time. The public broadcaster (TVSH) provided free airtime to all election contestants in accordance with the law, and increasingly fair coverage as the campaign progressed.

This trend continued at the 2001 parliamentary elections, although coverage by TVSH deteriorated after the first round, favouring the governing party.

Since the last elections, there has been growing concern about government intervention in the media. In a market which cannot guarantee a sound financial basis for the survival of so many operators, and in which, for example, over 60% of advertising in print media is paid by state institutions, government sponsored advertising has become a means to exert pressure on the media. The authorities have increasingly chosen to advertise with supportive media and private businesses are reportedly fearful of advertising with anti-government media lest they risk financial inspections. As a result, it appears that a majority of media outlets have become openly pro-government in their reporting. The EOM should pay careful attention to this issue.

Responsibility for regulating media conduct lies with the National Council for Radio and Television (NCRT). However, the NCRT remains a weak entity that continues to allow broadcasters to operate without full compliance with the law.

G. PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

The ODIHR Final Report on the 2001 parliamentary elections noted that although very active at the grassroots level in politics, women generally face difficulties in being selected as candidates and reaching leading positions in political parties. Only 7% of candidates in single-members zones and 15% of candidates in the proportional list elections were women.

Women were also underrepresented in the election administration. None of the CEC members were women, and only 7% of Zone Election Commission (ZEC) members and around 8% of VCC members were women.

On a positive note, nearly all political parties and coalitions included references to women's concerns and several organized events targeted specifically at women voters. TVSH also targeted women voters with a number of special programmes featuring prominent women politicians. Only eight women (5.71%) were elected to parliament. Participation of women in the 2000 local government elections was not assessed by the ODIHR. However, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), eight (12.3%) women were elected mayors of municipalities and 5 (1.6%) commune mayors.⁶

Since the 2001 elections, a major project by the UNDP to increase the participation of women in political life has stimulated considerable debate about the issue and the need to increase the participation of women in political life was discussed at length by the bi-partisan committee. Within the committee, there was widespread agreement that the current electoral system for parliamentary elections is not conducive to increasing the number of women candidates, but there was little support for the introduction of quotas to raise women's membership of legislative bodies. Following the local government elections, discussions will begin on a possible change to the

⁶ "Common Country Assessment – Albania", prepared for the UNDP by the Albanian Center for Economic Research, Tirana, May 2002.

electoral system for parliamentary elections. Women's groups and women politicians strongly support a move to proportional representation.

The bi-partisan committee called on political parties to encourage greater participation of women in elections in line with a recommendation contained in the ODIHR Final Report on the 2001 parliamentary elections. Another recommendation, that VCC members should be trained to emphasize that group voting should not be permitted, and voter education programmes should explain to women the importance of making a personal choice when casting their vote, should be assessed by the EOM.

H. PARTICIPATION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES

Official figures, dating from the 1989 census, put minorities at three to four percent of the population. Questions on ethnicity were absent from the 2001 census. According to the 2000 law on political parties, there is no legal impediment to create a political party on an ethnic, religious or regional basis, as long as they do not encourage and support racial, religious, regional or ethnic hatred.

No seats in parliament or local government are reserved for minorities, but, in recent years the Assembly has usually contained five to 10 minority representatives and local government bodies a somewhat greater proportion, as parties have fielded minority candidates in relevant areas.

The Department of Prefectures in the Ministry of Local Government contains a National Minority Section that monitors the involvement of minorities in local and national decision-making. In 2000, an Office of National Minorities was created in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to monitor Albania's conformity with minority-related international commitments.

I. INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC OBSERVERS

All interlocutors welcomed the prospect of an ODIHR observation of the local government elections. The Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) has also indicated that it will send observers to the elections.

Under the old Electoral Code, observers were provided with full access to all levels of the election administration. The new Electoral Code broadens their rights to include examination of electoral material and documentation and provides additional clarification on the process of appointing observers. The new Code also provides that a complaint can be filed when an application for observer accreditation is refused, but makes clear that domestic and international observers must not violate the secrecy of the vote or hamper the process of voting and election administration.

At the last elections, domestic observer groups reported no problems in receiving accreditation for their observers, or in gaining access to any aspect of the electoral process. The groups also reported improved relations with political parties and good co-operation with the election administration.

A number of domestic observer groups plan to observe the local government elections, including the Association for Democratic Culture, the Youth Council and the Albanian Helsinki Committee. In total, the groups intend to deploy between 1,500 and 2,000 observers over the election day period. The OSCE Presence has launched a project, implemented by the Albanian Institute for Election Systems Development, to train domestic observers and standardize observation methodology.

Political parties are able to deploy non-voting representatives to all levels of the election administration.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The NAM recommends that an Election Observation Mission be established according to the standard OSCE/ODIHR methodology. The NAM considers that the ODIHR should request the OSCE participating States to second 18 long-term observers to follow the campaign and election preparations, and 250 short-term observers for the observation of election day proceedings.

ANNEX

List of Meetings

Tirana

July 11-16, 2003

ALBANIAN AUTHORITIES

Central Election Commission

Mr. Ilirjan CELIBASHI, Chairman

Mr. Gasper KOKAJ, Deputy Chairman

Mr. Klement ZGURI, Member

Mr. Pandeli VARFI, Member

Mr. Maksim SHIMANI, Member

POLITICAL PARTIES

Socialist Party (SP)

Mr. Fatos NANO, Chairman and Prime Minister

Democratic Party (DP)

Dr. Sali BERISHA, Chairman

Mr. Ferdinand PONI, Head of Local Government Department

Representatives from:

New Democrat Party

Republican Party

National Front Party

Liberal Democrat Union Party

Social Democratic Party

Social Democracy Party

Agrarian Party

Christian Democrat Party

MEDIA

Albanian Media Institute

Mr. Remzi LANI, Executive Director

TVSH (Albanian Public Television)

Ms. Anita HOXHA, Journalist

Daily "Albania"

Mr. Lutfi DERVISHI, Editor in Chief

Daily "Shekulli"

Mr. Mustafa NANO, Analyst

IRDD – Center for Freedom of Press

Mr. Henri CILI, Director

CIVIL SOCIETY

Albanian Institute for Election Systems Development

Mr. Kristaq KUME, Director

Albanian Helsinki Committee

Mrs. Vasilika HYSI, Executive Director

Albanian Youth Council

Mrs. Arjola AGOLLI, Executive Director

Balkan Youth Link

Mr. Endri FUGA, General Manager

Ms. Sagita MUCA

National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI)

Mr. Dan REDFORD, Director of Political Party Program

International Republican Institute (IRI)

Ms. Najada TAFILI, Program Officer

Mrs. Alma ÇELAJ, Deputy Program Officer

International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES)

Mr. Dickson BAILEY, Program Director

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Embassies

Ambassador David LANDSMAN, British Ambassador

Ambassador Dimitri ILIOPOULOS, Greek Ambassador

Ambassador Johan F.L. BLANKENBERG, Netherlands Ambassador

Mr Charlie JACOBINI, Economic Officer, US Embassy

OSCE Presence in Albania

Ambassador LIPPONEN, Head of Presence

Mr. Alex FINNEN, Deputy Head of Presence

Mr. Eric FILIPINK, Political Officer

Mr. Robert ADAMS, Head of Democratization Department

Mr. Oerd BYLYKBASHI, Electoral Reform Officer

Mr. Phil FIGGINS, Field Station Coordinator

Mr. James McCARTHY, Military and Security Liaison Officer

Ms. Dinka ZIVALJ, Press and Public Information Officer

Mr. Jorma PENNANEN, Logistics Officer