



Republic of Tajikistan
Parliamentary Elections – First Round
27 February 2005
OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission

STATEMENT OF PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Election Observation Mission (EOM) for the 27 February elections to the lower chamber of parliament, *Majlisi Namoyandagon*, or Assembly of Representatives, was established by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODHR) in response to an invitation from the Central Commission on Elections and Referenda (CCER) of the Republic of Tajikistan. The EOM did not assess the local and regional elections held on the same day, except to the extent that they impacted directly on the parliamentary elections.

This statement of preliminary findings and conclusions is issued before the completion of the tabulation and the announcement of the final election results, before all complaints and appeals have been addressed, and before a complete analysis of all election day findings. The final assessment of the elections will depend on the manner in which these important procedures are completed, as well as the conduct of any second round voting.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

The 27 February 2005 elections in Tajikistan failed to meet many key OSCE commitments and other international standards on democratic elections. Despite some positive aspects of the election process, including a few elements that showed improvement over previous elections, large scale irregularities were evident, particularly on election day. Serious shortcomings that were inconsistent with either national legislation, OSCE election-related commitments or other standards for democratic elections included:

- The composition of election commissions was not sufficiently inclusive and pluralistic to ensure broad confidence. In particular, many local officials, affiliated with the party in power, held senior positions on election commissions. This raised serious questions in regard to the independence of electoral commissions from the government;
- As far as the EOM could determine, the CCER and many District Election Commissions (DECs) did not meet in public session for most of the pre-election period, undermining transparency and calling into question how they could make decisions in accordance with law;
- The political campaign was to a large extent controlled and managed by election officials and government authorities, rather than by the candidates themselves;
- Two well-known opposition leaders were prevented from running for office on the basis of criminal charges filed before the elections, although they had not been

convicted. Several other opposition leaders have been imprisoned over the past year and some political parties have not been registered;

- The official complaints process was not transparent or effective;
- The effective closure of four independent newspapers and the inability of others to register represented a pattern of official interference with the press that undercut a democratic election process;
- The lack of readily available information about the candidates and parties in state and most private media, as well as instances of censorship of political party messages on state TV, called into question the voters' ability to make an informed choice.

At the same time, some positive elements of the elections, included:

- A peaceful election process, with no serious instances of violence directly related to the elections;
- Six political parties and many self-nominated candidates participated, offering a measure of pluralism and a choice for the voters;
- Amendments to the election law improved somewhat the legislative framework under which the elections were conducted;
- Some helpful confidence-building measures were adopted, including transparent ballot boxes and ballot security features;
- The state media was reasonably balanced in its news coverage and carried many public service announcements on the election.

Election day was calm and peaceful, with 80 per cent of polling stations visited assessed positively by observers. Nevertheless, voting day was marked by large scale procedural irregularities. Proxy voting was a widespread and serious problem. Ballots were not adequately controlled or accounted for in most polling stations visited. The counting process in many polling stations raised serious concern; observers evaluated the process as “poor” or “very poor” in 53 per cent of polling stations visited. Proper counting procedures necessary to ensure the integrity of the process were generally not followed, and the use of pencils to complete protocols remained a serious problem. The turnout figures reported in some areas were improbably high, in light of apparently moderate turnout witnessed by observers. The tabulation of results raised very serious questions, since many PSCs delivered blank protocols to DECAs and observers witnessed protocols that were tampered with, raising doubts about the integrity of the tabulation process. Some EOM observers faced serious obstruction of their work during the vote count and tabulation in polling stations and at nine DECAs.

The OSCE/ODIHR remains prepared to assist the authorities and civil society of Tajikistan in improving its electoral process.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Background

The elections of 27 February 2005 were held to select members of the lower chamber of parliament, *Majlisi Namoyandagon*, or Assembly of Representatives; the upper chamber is elected indirectly. The *Majlisi Namoyandagon* has 63 members; 22 elected through a proportional, party list system from a single nation-wide constituency, and 41 elected in single mandate constituencies under a majoritarian system. Parties must pass a five per cent threshold to win seats on the party list vote. In the single mandate constituencies, candidates must win an absolute majority of votes to be elected, otherwise a second round of voting is held between the two leading candidates two weeks later. For all voting, there must be at least a 50 per cent voter turnout for the results to be valid.

Tajikistan continues to suffer from the consequences of the civil war, which include a deep division between the government and some opposition parties, as well as a sense in some quarters that stability should take priority over democracy. There have been some improvements in the political landscape since the last elections, including better security conditions, an ongoing dialogue and some co-operation between the government and registered opposition parties, and a growth in civil society. In the political sphere, however, substantially increased power has accrued to the President, the opposition no longer holds 30 per cent of senior positions in government as it did under the peace agreement, and the space for independent political activity and independent media appears to have narrowed.

Legislative Framework

The elections were regulated primarily by the Constitution and the Constitutional Law on Elections (the election law), adopted in 1999 and amended on 16 June 2004. The new amendments, which were adopted after a period of extended discussion with participation of opposition parties, incorporated some welcome improvements. These included provisions opening electoral commission meetings to the public, a prohibition on interference in the elections by state structures, the possibility of opposition representation on mid-level election commissions, improved access for candidates and parties to state radio and television, and a requirement to post results of the count in each polling station. While the legal framework still requires significant improvements, it could have provided a basis for the conduct of democratic elections if implemented with a view toward inclusiveness and impartiality, and if supplemented by detailed regulations to fill the law's many gaps.

Unfortunately, the potential benefits of many of the new amendments were not realized due to inadequate or arbitrary implementation. For example, opening electoral meetings to the public had no practical effect since most electoral commissions did not hold public meetings. Prohibiting interference by governmental structures proved largely

meaningless because so many government officials were appointed as election officials. Moreover, many of the law's most significant deficiencies were not remedied by the 2004 amendments. Of particular concern, the election law does not provide for the inclusive and pluralistic composition of election commissions; there is no provision for domestic non-partisan observers; procedures for resolving complaints are inadequate; additional requirements have been imposed on candidate registration; and provisions on voter registration, voting procedures, counting and tabulation are so vague that they are open to easy abuse.

The CCER did not adopt detailed, binding regulations to fill the many gaps in the law.

Election Administration

The election was administered by a three-tiered administration: the CCER, 41 DEC's and 2,953 Polling Station Commissions (PSCs). The CCER has 15 members appointed by the parliament on the proposal of the President. The CCER had a limited budget (US\$800,000), staff and computer facilities. The CCER Chairman and his staff, as well as many DEC leaders, met regularly with the EOM.

In general, the structure of election commissions lacked inclusive and pluralistic representation, and as a result opposition parties often lacked confidence in the commissions. The election law provides only that political party suggestions should be considered when DEC members are appointed. In practice, it appears that the nominees of political parties were generally included in DEC's, which was a positive step. There is no legal provision for party representation on the CCER or PSC's, but a few opposition members were appointed to the CCER and some DEC's apparently made an effort to include opposition members on PSC's. Overall, however, election commissions were dominated by supporters of the governing party.

As far as the EOM could determine, the CCER held no public meetings during the five weeks prior to the elections, raising serious concern about the transparency and accountability of its work. The lack of meetings brought into question how it could adopt decisions in accordance with provisions of the election law, which requires a two-thirds quorum and a vote of more than 50 per cent of those present to adopt decisions.

The formation of single mandate constituencies – a CCER responsibility – was another area of concern. The 41 constituencies vary greatly in size, from 50,454 voters in Vanj to 103,383 voters in Isfara. This calls into question the equality of the vote and violates the election law, which permits only a 15 per cent deviation (20 per cent in remote areas) in the size of constituencies. In Isfara, for instance, where opposition parties have previously won mandates, each seat represents almost twice as many voters as in some Dushanbe constituencies. Almost one third of all constituencies (13 of 41) do not meet the law's requirements in this regard.

The law does not include clearly defined procedures on early voting, mobile voting, out-of-country voting or military voting. The CCER did not adopt clear regulations to deal

with these issues, leading to some confusion in lower level commissions and a of lack of transparency on election day.

The CCER did make an effort to clarify some procedures. The CCER training guide for PSCs, for example, set out detailed procedures to improve the polling process and included important new stipulations, such as insisting that PSC protocols should be filled out in pen. Although the manual appeared to be in general use by DEC members and PSCs, a disturbingly high number of DEC members did not appear to be familiar with its provisions. Moreover, the procedures in the training guide were never adopted as official regulations and therefore did not have legally binding status.

In what might have been two particularly important steps forward for transparency, the CCER Chairman pledged to the EOM that observers in PSCs would be able to obtain a signed and sealed official copy of the PSC results protocol, and that the CCER would make public the detailed results, by polling station, when it announced the preliminary election results on the day after voting. In practice, however, it appeared that most observers were not able to obtain official copies of protocols. On election day, senior CCER officials told the EOM they would not release detailed results by polling station. The failure to fulfill these commitments greatly diminished the transparency of the elections.

In an improvement from previous elections the CCER undertook an active program of training for DEC and PSC members, with the assistance of the international community.

The election law states that election commissions are independent from government. However, there was a widespread practice of appointing senior officials of regional and local government as members of election commissions, including Chairpersons, at all levels, especially in DEC members. This practice was a serious concern since it called into question the independence of the election administration from the local executive. In practice, the distinction between local government and the election administration was often unclear, for example, when election materials were kept in local government offices or local officials organized campaign meetings in their capacity as DEC members.

Most DEC members, like the CCER also appeared not to hold public meetings, raising concerns about the legality of their decision-making processes. Although some DEC members operated with a greater degree of transparency, several DEC members (numbers 1, 4, 11, 13, 17 and 37) denied EOM observers access to documents and information, in violation of the law.

Technical preparations for the elections were generally completed on time. Transparent ballot boxes were procured – a positive new step – and polling materials were distributed to DEC members in a timely manner. Ballot security was improved through use of a watermark and by having all the ballots printed at a central location. The EOM was not permitted to observe the printing of ballots.

The EOM received credible allegations that members of two DEC members (numbers 13 and 17) were asked by a DEC superior to sign blank DEC results protocols, a very serious charge

that would imply an effort to falsify results. An opposition party filed a complaint with the state prosecutor, but as of election day, no charges had been brought. The EOM request for a meeting with the prosecutor was not granted.

There is no national voter register in Tajikistan. Voter lists are compiled locally for each election, usually by updating a previous list through a door-to-door survey. There was clearly a considerable effort in many localities to update and correct the lists. Nevertheless, the system is open to inaccuracies or potential multiple registration. Of particular concern is the large number of citizens of Tajikistan working abroad (estimated at 400,000 or more), who may appear on the regular voter lists as well as on the lists compiled by embassies and other government offices abroad.

The deadline for voter registration was 12 February, after which the lists were supposed to be displayed at polling stations for public review. In many cases the lists were not completed and displayed on time. Nevertheless, names could be added to the voter lists up to and including on election day. There were about 3.1 million eligible voters.

Candidates and Campaign Environment

Six political parties took part in the elections: the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the Communist Party (CP), the Islamic Revival Party (IRP), the Socialist Party (SP), the Democratic Party (DP) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP). Some parties were not registered by the government and were therefore ineligible to participate in the elections, showing that the political party environment remains to some extent restricted. In a positive move, on 1 February, all six registered parties signed a code of conduct on campaign behavior.

About 230 candidates were registered for the 63 seats available, including some self-nominated candidates not affiliated with political parties. The variety of candidates and parties demonstrated a measure of pluralism and offered voters a choice, including an opportunity to vote for an Islamic party, which is the only legal Islamic party in the region. Overall however, the political landscape in Tajikistan is circumscribed. About 40 registered candidates withdrew from the race, most of them within two days before election day, raising questions about the bona fides of their candidacies and creating some confusion on election day.

In the months leading up to the elections, a series of detentions, court cases and charges against opposition party leaders had a serious negative impact on the political landscape. The election law prohibits candidates from running if they are wanted by state authorities in connection with serious crimes, even if they have not been convicted. This contradicts the universal principle of presumption of innocence enshrined in the Constitution. Two well-known opposition candidates – Mahmadrusi Iskandarov and Sulton Kuvatov – were excluded on this basis in the months leading up to the election. Whatever the facts of the cases, the disqualification of major candidates on the eve of an election is a cause for grave concern. In addition, several other leading members of opposition parties are in custody or prison following arrests in the past year, including the deputy head of the

unregistered Taraqqiyot Party, and two senior members of the IRP. The prevalence of such cases calls into question the openness of the political process in Tajikistan.

The arrest of Mr. Iskandarov all but destroyed the DP, for this election at least. Also, in late 2004, after a split in the SP, the Ministry of Justice registered a leadership that was pro-government rather than opposition. Two of the six registered parties were thus effectively neutralized by government action in the weeks leading up to the election.

With a few exceptions, the candidate registration process appears to have been reasonably administered. However, the provisions of law on approving candidates are vague and were often applied in a restrictive and non-uniform manner, disadvantaging some candidates and limiting their opportunities to seek legal redress. For example, Ms. Fayzinisso Vahidova was accepted by the CCER as a party list candidate, but was denied registration by a DEC as a single mandate candidate on the basis of the same financial declaration. About 100 prospective candidates were not registered. The overwhelming reasons for refusals were failure to present sufficient valid signatures or to post the required deposit.

The candidate registration deposit was very high by local standards (US\$800, or the equivalent of 16 years of minimum wage income). Virtually all parties complained that the high deposit eliminated many potential candidates and limited voter choice. A requirement that candidates have higher education was contrary to OSCE commitments and was a barrier to some prospective candidates.

Under the election law, candidates may begin campaigning as soon as they are registered, rather than at a set time. This meant some candidates were free to campaign before others. This system led to unequal conditions for some candidates, generally disadvantaging independents and opposition members.

Only the ruling PDP ran candidates in all parts of the country. The IRP had candidates in about half of the 41 single mandate constituencies, while the CP had candidates in 13 constituencies. The CP has allied itself with the PDP in some districts. The three smaller parties ran candidates in a few districts and there were 77 self-nominated candidates, many of whom seemed to be affiliated with the PDP. PDP candidates appeared to have more access to public resources – buildings, offices, transportation, and local officials – than did their opponents, blurring the line between government and political parties.

The election campaign was extremely subdued, with practically no real debate and few evident differences among the parties on economic or social issues. There appeared to be little active campaigning until about two weeks before the elections. Even then, there were no major rallies and relatively few campaign posters. To the extent that candidates campaigned individually, they tended to hold very small meetings with voters, canvass door-to-door, or hand out leaflets. Opposition candidates complained about difficulty obtaining authorization from local authorities to get premises for their campaign meetings.

According to the election law, DEC's can assist in arranging meetings with voters. In practice, however, most campaign meetings were organized by the DEC's, rather than by the candidates themselves. There were many such meetings throughout the country. In general, all candidates in a district were invited, although the EOM observed instances in which opposition candidates were not informed of impending meetings, informed at the last moment, or even prevented from entering.

The DEC-organized meetings usually enabled candidates to make their speeches freely, but there was seldom an exchange of views and questions from voters were often discouraged. In some instances, these meetings drew several hundred voters, although some attendees stated they were required to attend, and opposition candidates complained the audiences were stacked with government party supporters. The meetings were often presided over by local (*hukumat*) officials, who in some instances used their participation unfairly to endorse ruling party candidates and to cut short speeches by other candidates. Overall, the system resulted in undue official control over the campaign, in particular since so many DEC leaders were also local officials and PDP members.

In the later stages of the campaign, opposition candidates raised an increasing number of allegations of pressures, harassment, threats and obstruction to their campaigns. In one instance, the police in Dushanbe reportedly arrested activists putting up posters, and in a separate incident confirmed by the EOM, activists were detained by Dushanbe police for handing out leaflets. Opposition parties alleged threats against themselves or their relatives to withdraw their candidatures or leave their parties. Some individuals reportedly were threatened with termination of employment if they supported the opposition. Several opposition parties complained that their members were denied accreditation as polling station observers.

Popular knowledge of and interest in the election appeared to be quite limited, despite efforts by the CCER and non-governmental organizations to promote public awareness and involvement. There also appeared to be an inherent reluctance by much of the population to speak out against or contradict the establishment. This tendency, together with the generally low level of public involvement in the democratic process, provided a significant advantage to the incumbents.

The campaign was peaceful, a notable improvement over the previous election. The only violent incident of the campaign period was a powerful car bomb outside the Ministry of Emergencies on 31 January, which killed one person and injured many. Although there was apparently no direct link with the elections, the bomb blast did increase tensions in Dushanbe and disrupted the non-violent atmosphere which should surround an election.

Complaints and Appeals

Complaints on election-related issues could be filed with either a first instance court or with election commissions by candidates, parties, voters, proxies or observers. Decisions on complaints could be appealed to a superior commission or to the Supreme Court.

As of 24 February, the CCER had received 56 complaints. Of these, 22 concerned candidate registration; just three were decided in favor of the complainants. Another 19 complaints were forwarded by the CCER to other state organs and 15 pertained to the local elections. Despite numerous official requests, the EOM was denied access to any complaints until four days before the election, and was then selectively shown 21 and denied access to the rest.

As far as the EOM could determine from the information made available to it, only two complaints received binding, official decisions by the CCER; the rest were answered by letter. The CCER was not clear as to why it used different procedures to respond to different cases. This became a significant distinction, however, since the Supreme Court ruled that it could review only official decisions of the CCER, not complaints that were responded to by letter. The effect was that the large majority of complainants were denied the possibility of a judicial appeal.

The CCER set up a working group to deal with complaints and appeals. The group, however, apparently never met in public session. Under the election law the CCER must take its decisions in public session. These circumstances raised concerns that CCER decisions on complaints were taken arbitrarily.

Most of the complaints and appeals filed with the Supreme Court resulted in the Court referring them to lower courts or declaring that the complainant had no standing. Copies of the complaints were not available, although the Supreme Court did provide copies of its rulings. Two complaints to the Supreme Court were launched by members or heads of DEC's against the CCER; both were refused, one because there was no official decision by the CCER, and the other because the DEC head had no standing to file an appeal.

In general, the vagueness of the legal provisions on resolving complaints, coupled with apparently arbitrary interpretations by the CCER and the Supreme Court, resulted in a process that was inconsistent and that did not provide an effective means of redress.

Media Environment

The election law provides a limited legal framework for the campaign in the media. It gives candidates and parties a right to use free airtime in the state electronic media (15 and 30 minutes, respectively), but does not set out how this is to be implemented. CCER resolution 279 (adopted on 27 December 2004) reiterated the law, but provided no further guidance. The resolution also provided candidates and parties with a right to publish up to eight pages, free of charge, in state-owned print media outlets, as was done in 2000.

EOM media monitoring of state and private media outlets showed that there was a general lack of analytical or critical reports and articles. Predominantly neutral or positive coverage of the political actors indicates that self-censorship, reported also by many EOM interlocutors, was frequently exercised. In general, there was little active media coverage of the campaign, raising doubts whether most voters could get sufficient, varied

information to enable them to make an informed choice. The candidates' free media time was the primary means by which information was conveyed to voters.

State TV devoted very limited coverage to the candidates and parties in news programs (just six per cent of its news coverage) and did not broadcast candidate debates. Sixty-three per cent of state TV's political news coverage centered on activities of the President and the national and local governments, rather than the election. However, almost 30 per cent of its political news coverage was devoted to presentations of the CCER and other election commissions. Some political parties were covered briefly in state TV current affairs programs; the PDP and the CP received most coverage. State TV did air several election-related programs to provide voters with information about the process of the elections. In addition, state TV broadcast a special election program designed to provide voters with a chance to express their political opinions regarding the elections.

All six political parties used their 30 minutes of free airtime on state TV during the last week of the campaign. However, two opposition parties claimed that portions of their broadcasts were censored or altered by state TV; a state TV official acknowledged to the EOM that this was true in at least one case. Candidates were also able to use their free time, although only about a third did so.

Voter education spots were widely presented on both state and private TV. In one case, however, a public service spot explaining how to mark the ballot did so by showing a voter voting for the ruling PDP.

An initiative of the Vose-based private TV channel *Mavji Ozod* to organize a debate among political party representatives was obstructed by the Chairman of DEC 37, who insisted that the program either be paid by political parties, or that the TV station donate money to the parties' electoral fund to cover the costs for organizing the debate. As a result, the program was cancelled.

Paid advertisements were not widely used by political parties. Only some of them, primarily IRP and PDP, placed a few paid political advertisements in the broadcast media. The State Committee for Radio and Television refused to allow broadcast of a paid spot of the DP, apparently because the jailed head of the party, Mr. Iskandarov, was portrayed; this constituted undue interference with a paid political broadcast. SDP also complained that state TV refused to air its paid advertisements.

In the week before the elections, a private television station in Sughd, *TV Guli bodom*, owned by a self-nominated candidate, was suspended from broadcasting by a decision of the State Committee for Radio and TV. The closure was ostensibly because the station was not being even-handed in its election coverage; the effect, however, was to obstruct the campaign of a prominent candidate running against the governing party.

Among the print media, only *Asia-Plus* provided somewhat more variety of information about the activities of all the political parties. Less than 25 per cent of candidates used the opportunity to publish free presentations in the state newspapers. However, there are no

daily newspapers in Tajikistan, and readership of weekly publications is quite low, so print information did not reach a wide audience.

The private newspapers *Nerui Sukhan*, *Ruzi Nav*, *Odamu Olam*, and *Adolat* were not able to publish in the lead up to the elections, since no state or private printing house in Tajikistan would print them, and attempts to print abroad and import copies were stopped by the authorities. The effective closure of these newspapers, as well as the failure by authorities to register other new publications, had a serious negative effect on the availability of diverse views. The apparently systematic pattern of government action against independent media was inconsistent with a democratic election process.

Participation of Women and Minorities

Women are generally underrepresented in politics in Tajikistan. No women are heads of political parties and there are few women in senior positions in parties. Political parties do not have women's sections.

There were 34 women out of a total of 230 candidates. All six registered parties had women on their party lists, although in general they were in positions too low to expect to be elected. The PDP and SDP had women among the first three names on their lists, and the PDP placed women rather evenly throughout its list. Women ran as candidates in 14 of the 41 single mandate constituencies; in three constituencies there were two women running and in 11 constituencies one woman ran.

The relatively low numbers of politically active women is usually explained by a combination of traditional, cultural norms and poor economic conditions, which make it difficult for many women to enter politics. The high candidate registration deposit presented a particular barrier for women. Traditionally, male heads of households have often proxy-voted on behalf of their wives and other family members.

Tajikistan has several national minorities, of which ethnic Uzbeks are by far the largest, numbering as many as 25 per cent of the population. There was no overt discrimination against ethnic Uzbeks, nor were any formal barriers placed in the way of their full participation in the electoral process. At the same time, however, members of the Uzbek minority did not appear to be actively engaged in the elections as candidates. Political parties did not have messages designed to appeal to Uzbek voters.

In addition to ballots being available in the Tajik language, they were also available in Uzbek and Russian.

Election Day

Election day was calm and peaceful. Voting was assessed positively in 80 per cent of polling stations visited by observers. Observers reported that voting was generally organized adequately, although some polling station premises were assessed inadequate for polling (6 per cent), many lacking sufficient booths to ensure secrecy.

Proxy voting was a widespread and serious problem, witnessed by observers in over a third of polling stations visited. In a large proportion of polling stations, ballots were not controlled or accounted for by election officials: voters were given ballots without producing acceptable identification (44 per cent of polling stations visited); voter lists contained multiple signatures in the same hand (55 per cent of polling stations visited); and the number of ballots received by polling stations was not entered into protocols at the start of voting day (66 per cent). These weak controls opened the door for possible serious abuses. Evidence of ballot stuffing by election officials was witnessed in DEC9/PSC35 and DEC7/PSC1.

Some voter turnout figures reported by PSCs were improbably high, in light of the apparently moderate turnout witnessed by observers. A number of polling stations closed early, reporting 100 per cent turnout.

Many observers reported that unauthorized persons were in polling stations directing voters on how to vote. In a number of instances, political party observers were denied access to polling stations.

Counting and tabulation procedures were assessed much more negatively by observers than voting; 53 per cent of counts witnessed by observers were assessed as “poor” or “very poor”. Proper counting procedures were often not followed (e.g., unused ballot were not invalidated in 32 per cent of polling stations where EOM observed the count, and the validity of ballots was not determined consistently in 35 per cent of counts observed). Most PSCs observed displayed poor knowledge of correct procedures.

Contrary to repeated assurances from the CCER, over 80 per cent of PSC observed did not provide official copies of the counting protocols to observers. In 75 per cent of polling stations visited, the PSC did not publicly post a copy of the protocol, as required by law. In eight polling stations, EOM observers were hindered in their efforts to observe the counting.

Major serious violations took place during the reporting and tabulation of the PSC results. PSC members delivered protocols completed in pencil or blank, signed protocols to many DECs (numbers 3, 4, 5, 13, 17, 28, 31, 33, and 39). Observers witnessed protocols that were tampered with in DECs 1 and 36. Cases of PSC protocols being delivered first to government offices rather than to DECs were witnessed in DECs 15 and 19. Several DECs obstructed the work of observers (DECs 1, 3, 4, 31). These procedures at DEC level cast serious doubts on the integrity of the tabulation process.

MISSION INFORMATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mr. Peter Eicher headed the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission (EOM). The EOM was established in Dushanbe on 24 January 2005 and shortly thereafter started monitoring the electoral process, with 17 Long-term Observers located in seven cities throughout the country.

On election day, the EOM deployed 150 observers from some 30 OSCE participating States. Representatives of embassies of OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation in Tajikistan and of international organizations also contributed short-term observers to the EOM. On election day, observers paid some 600 visits to polling stations out of the approximately 3,000 throughout the country.

The OSCE/ODIHR will issue a comprehensive report on these elections approximately six weeks after the completion of the election process.

The EOM wishes to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Central Commission on Elections and Referenda and other State and local authorities for their assistance and co-operation during the course of the observation. The EOM also expresses its appreciation to the OSCE Centre in Dushanbe, as well as other international organizations and embassies accredited in Tajikistan, for their support throughout the mission.

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