

**ATƏT YANINDA
AZƏRBAYCAN RESPUBLİKASININ
DAİMİ NÜMAYƏNDƏLİYİ**



ENGLISH only
**PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN
TO THE OSCE**

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**Statement
at the 835th meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
November 11, 2010**

Mr. Chairman.

As it is known, on November 7th 2010, the fourth call elections to the Milli Majlis (Parliament) were held in the Republic of Azerbaijan. Before going into the results and post-election developments in the country, I would like to brief you on the process of preparation and conduct of these elections.

To achieve successful results in this direction, enormous work has been done in the following areas, such as: voters' lists have been updated; Constituency election commissions activity have been monitored; their logistical capacities have been strengthened; numerous trainings and awareness-raising measures have been organized for election commissions members and other relevant officials involving more than 30,000 people; complaints and appeals procedures have been tackled; transparency and accountability has been increased through active mass media coverage.

Pursuant to the Election Code, the Central Election Commission (CEC) has realized the process of specification of voters' lists since January till the end of May 2010. Along with hanging the voters' lists in the precincts for voters to be familiar with, they have also been located on the CEC website. Voters could call hotline #115 regarding the elimination of the shortcomings related to their personal information or appeal to CEC by completing the relevant online application form.

Working conditions of 125 constituency election commissions have been improved, including construction of new administrative buildings and repair and re-construction of existing ones. In 2010 newly constructed administrative building of the CEC was inaugurated, Center of the State Automated Information System and network of web-cameras installed for live observation were moved to this new building.

In the framework of educational programs, seminar-trainings for lower election commissions were conducted jointly with the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe. Another relevant project was implemented together with OSCE Baku Office on the topic “Prevention of illegal intervention into the election process”. These information sessions were organized for the heads of region executive authorities and constituency elections commissions’ chairpersons and covered several regions of the republic.

Another point of focus in the preparations to the elections has been voter education. Target-oriented programs have been carried out to this end, which were widely highlighted using media outlets.

On June 18, 2010 some amendments were made to the Election Code, which was followed by works aimed at increasing awareness on these amendments and adoption of necessary normative-legal acts by CEC to effectively implement these legislative amendments in the elections process.

Regarding the candidate registration, 1412 claimers were issued signature sheets and only 1115 of them collected signatures and submitted sheets to constituency elections commissions. 738 claimers were registered as candidates, 53 persons withdrew their candidacies and finally names of 688 candidates were included in ballot papers, 94 persons of them were women.

I would like to emphasize that complaints and appeals related to the registration were dealt by the Expert Group established in the CEC. Overall, 780 relevant appeals were registered by the CEC hotline#115 and duly considered.

During the pre-election campaign, that started on October 15, 2010 the candidates were provided with free air time on Public TV and free publishing space in the “Azerbaijan” newspaper. Furthermore, 4930 venues were allocated for the candidates’ use, to meet with their voters.

Being convinced that transparency of the elections has an important role in overall process, 46639 local, 1029 international observers were registered to follow the parliamentary elections. CEC accredited 43 representatives of international mass media outlets, including Reuters, BBC, TRT, Aljazeera, Associated Press and others.

“ELS” Independent Investigations Center was registered for conducting exit-poll on the elections day.

As an innovative practice Azerbaijan has been using since 2008, web-cameras were used in 10% of election precincts (approximately 500) also for this parliamentary elections.

Coming to the elections, on November 7, the voter turnout was 50,14% (2480205 voters). The people of Azerbaijan free willingly defined and voted for their candidates to represent them in the next 5 years at the Parliament.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me, also to dwell upon couple issues which were indicated in the preliminary statement of the International Observation Mission. Unfortunately, the Preliminary Conclusions of the statement are marked with contradictions. On the one hand, it is stated that "Voting on election day was assessed positively in almost 90 per cent of the 1100 polling stations (out of 5175) visited by observers, whereas serious problems were noted in some 10 per cent". On the other hand, the mission gave a conclusion that "the conduct of these elections overall was not sufficient to constitute meaningful progress in the democratic development of the country".

Another disappointing issue for us is a big discrepancy among the conclusions of other international organizations on the parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan and the one of the International Observation Mission.

After the elections, Mr. Paul Wille, Head of the delegation of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly stated: "In a welcome departure from the past, the run-up to the elections and election day were peaceful and not marred by violent incidents, all opposition parties opted to participate in the political process, sometimes running as part of electoral blocs, rather than to boycott it as was the case in the past. A positive environment was created by good co-operation between the authorities, international institutions and the domestic actors".

In the light of above-mentioned, we would like once again to raise the issue of competence and experience of short-term observer mission members. It is our strong belief that STO mission members have to be selected carefully, bearing in mind the professionalism, acquaintance with the country, its history, traditions and legacy. Establishment of STO mission should be based on qualitative and not quantitative approach. Unfortunately, we quite often face a priori biased approach by the EOMs which is inadmissible. To avoid *inter alia* such kind of problems, election observation methodology should be addressed.

Mr. Chairman,

Democratic state-building is a permanently developing process and Azerbaijan has chosen this way on its own without being forced to it. It is in foremost interests of the Government of our country to create all necessary conditions for holding free and fair elections, which is a cornerstone of any democratic society.

Let us admit that there is not a single democratic state which can be considered ideal and put as an example for other countries. We all have to strive for better results in any area of democratic state-building, including elections processes.

Fully realizing that there is still room for improvement, my Government is committed to take all necessary measures in this regard and go ahead with even more devotion until the identified targets are reached.

In this respect, we pin great hope on continuation of a constructive dialogue, based on proper understanding of realities, and practical cooperation with all our international partners.

In conclusion, I would like to inform the distinguished audience that, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan issued a press-release reacting to the press statement on the parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan by the U.S. State Department. The press-release states that, "On November 8, 2010 U.S. State Department issued a statement on the parliamentary elections hold on November 7, 2010 in Azerbaijan. The statement caused feelings of surprise of disappointment in Azerbaijan. Thus, as a rule, in assessing elections in any country, the State Department's statement is not noticeably different from the assessment of the influential international organizations on the election.

The State Department declares that, the Parliamentary elections hold on November 7, 2010 in Azerbaijan "did not meet the international standards". The statement refers to the conclusions made by the election observation missions of the OSCE ODIHR, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, OSCE PA, and European Parliament. However, the referred document doesn't include similar assessment like the State Department's assessment.

The document distributed by the international organizations along with some deficiencies, underlines that elections were conducted in a peaceful and debated environment, all opposition parties participated at the elections and observation missions positively assessed election process in 90 percent of the polling stations. And this in principle indicates that, the elections earned the confidence of the population.

Alongside, the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan underlines that, conduct of democratic, fair and transparent elections is the aim of the Government and along with praising positive measures taken in this area, the Central Election Commission and other relevant structures will do their utmost to investigate and overcome any deficiencies observed during the elections process".

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

