

**ELECTION
MONITORING**

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NATO Parliamentary Assembly

**MONITORING OF THE PARLIAMENTARY
ELECTIONS IN AZERBAIJAN**

SECRETARIAT REPORT

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International Secretariat

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Assembly documents are available on its website, <http://www.nato-pa.int>

1. Nine members of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly took part in the International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) for the parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan on 6 November 2005. Michael Clapham, Chairman of the NATO PA Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security and Loïc Bouvard, former President of the NATO PA, led the delegation.
2. The IEOM consisted of delegations from the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and the European Parliament.
3. On Friday 4 and Saturday 5 November, ODIHR experts, election officials and representatives from political parties, from the media, and from NGOs, briefed the participants. Of key interest was the extent to which Azerbaijan corrected the electoral shortcomings identified by the OSCE in the 2003 presidential election.
4. The parliamentary elections represented an important test for the Azerbaijani authorities who had committed to organising free and fair elections. In its reports on the pre-election situation, the OSCE had noted some progress and several demonstrations of goodwill on the part of the authorities, including the late introduction of finger inking to prevent multiple voting.
5. On Sunday 6 November, the observers formed two-person teams deployed in polling stations in and around Baku. They typically observed the opening of a polling station, toured several others during the day and finished with the observation of a count. Overall, 160 parliamentary observers were deployed across the country, out of a total of 640 short-term observers.
6. On Monday 7 November, the IEOM presented their preliminary findings and conclusions to the press in a packed conference room at the Hyatt Hotel Baku.
7. The IEOM concluded that “the 6 November parliamentary elections did not meet a number of OSCE commitments and Council of Europe standards and commitments for democratic elections”. This statement relied on a comparative analysis of the positive developments and the shortcomings observed before and during the elections. The common statement enounces that “while there were improvements in some respects during the pre-election period, (...) uncertainty was evident with regard to key aspects of the process (...), and continued restrictions on the freedom of assembly (...) marred the campaign period. While voting was generally calm, the election day process deteriorated progressively during the counting and, in particular, the tabulation of the votes”. The counting process led to the most significant and serious violations. OSCE observers assessed the ballot counting as bad or very bad in 43% of counts observed.
8. Loïc Bouvard read the NATO PA statement, which also underlined this ambivalent picture. He praised the presence of local observers in many polling stations, while noting that there had been reports of impediments to the free exercise by these observers of their duties. He concluded that although “these elections represent a step forward, a lot still remains to be done for Azerbaijan to organise free and fair elections in full accordance with international standards”.
9. The NATO PA had another opportunity to discuss the outcome of the Azerbaijani elections during its annual session in Copenhagen, which was held only a few days later. On November 15, the NATO PA adopted a Declaration on Parliamentary Elections in Azerbaijan [234 SC 05 E bis], urging Azerbaijani authorities to resolve all disputes over election results, as well as to take necessary steps to reform electoral processes. The Declaration can be found at: <http://www.nato-pa.int/Default.asp?SHORTCUT=835>.

The IEOM Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions can be accessed at:
http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2005/11/16889_en.pdf

The IEOM press communiqué can be accessed at:
<http://www.osce.org/item/16887.html>
