



PRESS RELEASE

The OSCE/ODIHR report failed to present an objective pre-election environment in Azerbaijan

Vienna, 1 September 2015 – In response to the findings of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Needs Assessment Mission report on the upcoming parliamentary elections in the Republic of Azerbaijan dated August 31, 2015, the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the OSCE would like to express with regret that a number of steps taken by the Government of Azerbaijan to improve transparency and fair conduct of elections are missing from the report. As in previous times, majority of the NAM findings appear to be primarily shaped by the concerns of a narrow circle of interlocutors. The NAM report failed to reflect upon a full spectrum of views of the Azerbaijani society. Instead, the ODIHR experts had chosen to refer to some third party sources and, thus, attempted to present an incomplete and one-sided pre-election political landscape in Azerbaijan. In view of the Mission, the NAM report undermines the credibility of ODIHR election observation methodology and, its recommendations cannot serve as a reasonable basis for deployment of a large-scale OSCE/ODIHR monitoring mission in Azerbaijan.

It is of concern that the ODIHR methodology applied selectively, in particular a ratio of recommended number of long-term and short-term observers proportionate to the size of electorate or number of polling stations. For example, the OSCE/ODIHR in similar NAM reports recommended 60 LTOs and 200 STOs for 2011 parliamentary election in the Russian Federation (110 million voters), 36 LTOs and 400 STOs for 2012 parliamentary election in Kazakhstan (9 million voters), 40 LTOs and 270 STOs for 2012 parliamentary election in Belarus (7 million voters) and 16 LTOs and 150 STOs for parliamentary elections in Tajikistan (4.2 million voters).

Rationale of the OSCE/ODIHR NAM recommendation for deployment of 30 LTOs and 350 STOs for observing parliamentary election in Azerbaijan raises legitimate questions of the Azerbaijani side, since the suggested ratio is not in line with the ODIHR practice and compromises integrity of its election observation methodology. The concerns of Azerbaijan were communicated in writing to the ODIHR. Despite this fact, the OSCE/ODIHR announced on its web-site a recruitment of 30 LTOs and 350 STOs for observing upcoming parliamentary election in Azerbaijan.

The Permanent Mission underlines that the number of ODIHR long-term and short-term observers must be reasonable, given that the OSCE and Council of Europe

Parliamentary Assemblies as well other international institutions have expressed their interest to send their respective teams of observers, and commensurate to the need of observation of election of 125 members of the Parliament of Azerbaijan. In light of the above-mentioned the Permanent Mission reaffirms that the Azerbaijani authorities, consistently honoring their OSCE commitments, are ready to welcome 6 LTOs and up to 125 STOs from the OSCE/ODIHR for observing upcoming parliamentary election.