



Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
PRESS STATEMENT – IMMEDIATE, 3rd November 1996

INTRODUCTION

The formal details in regard to the mandate of this OSCE/ODIHR International Observer Mission were set out in our Final Statement on the first round of voting and this statement should be read in conjunction with that earlier document.

In the first round 28 International Observers visited 257 polling stations. In the second round there were 22 Observers - including two Parliamentarians - from twelve countries. Nine of them were Observers able to remain in Bulgaria or to return for the second round. They were deployed in nine regions and, in order to cover more of the country, visited polling stations in five new areas. These Observers were supplemented by a number of members of diplomatic missions accredited to the Republic of Bulgaria who contributed the results of their observation to the Mission.

POLLING DAY

As in the first round, Observers reported that, virtually without exception, the poll was conducted with exemplary professionalism, coupled with a sense of pride that the machinery of Bulgarian democracy works so effectively. Most of the members of the Sectional Election Commissions have been in office for a number of years and their experience is reflected in the calm and relaxed way they carry out their duties.

There were more reported individual instances of alleged malpractice than in the first round and, where possible, Observers followed up the reports. In Zamfir, near Lom, for example, Observers followed up reports of a threat being made at a polling station, including the use of a rifle clip. There had been a single unpleasant incident, it had been dealt with, and was not judged to be significant.

Observers based in Sliven also followed up allegations of campaigning in Kermen during the moratorium. There had apparently earlier been a minor infringement but it was not thought to be significant. In the Observers' judgement there was no evidence of any linkage between incidents.

THE COUNT

Observers reported that in the polling stations at which they were present the Count was conducted efficiently according to the rules.

CONCLUSIONS

The OSCE International Observer Mission congratulates the people of Bulgaria on the calm and determined way they have fulfilled their democratic rights and responsibilities in this Presidential election;

The Mission believes that, on the evidence of this election, and despite the widely reported economic and social pressures being experienced by the Bulgarian people, Bulgarian democracy is firmly based and respected; in particular the public appears to have confidence in the integrity of the electoral process, generally carried out on a consensual basis by the election commissions;

The Mission states its belief that the result of the Presidential election accurately reflects the wishes of the Bulgarian electors;

The Mission draws attention to its earlier comments on the style and content of the electoral law and hopes that its criticisms of the sections relating to the rights of candidates will be addressed. It further hopes that a consolidated version of the electoral law will be passed, bringing together the key provisions in a single document.

The Mission applauds the transparency of the Bulgarian electoral process, exemplified particularly by the publication of the detailed electoral statistics both on paper and in computer disk format.

[Statement given by Michael Meadowcroft, Co-ordinator of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights International Observer Mission to the Bulgarian Presidential Election 1996, at a Press Briefing at the NDK Centre, Sofia, 1500 hrs, 4th November 1996]

4 November 1996

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Further information from Michael Meadowcroft or Mark Power-Stevens, telephone: 442 719. Information in Bulgarian from Theo Shishmanov, Ilyana Sherkova or Monika Zlateva at the same telephone number. The Mission's office will be open until 8th November. After that date enquiries should be addressed to the OSCE/ODIHR office in Warsaw - details on front page.