



Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

# REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

EARLY PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

11 April 2018

OSCE/ODIHR NEEDS ASSESSMENT MISSION REPORT

21-22 February 2018



Warsaw  
2 March 2018

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**REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN**  
**EARLY PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**  
**11 April 2018**

**OSCE/ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission Report**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Following an invitation from the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan to observe the 11 April 2018 early presidential election, and in accordance with its mandate, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) undertook a Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) to Baku from 21 to 22 February 2018. The NAM included Alexander Shlyk, Head of ODIHR Election Department, Ana Rusu, ODIHR Senior Election Adviser, and Radivoje Grujić, ODIHR Election Adviser. The ODIHR NAM was joined by Iryna Sabashuk, Head of Administration for Election Observation of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

The purpose of the mission was to assess the pre-election environment and the preparations for the election. Based on this assessment, the NAM recommends whether to deploy an ODIHR election-related activity for the forthcoming election, and if so, what type of activity best meets the identified needs. Meetings were held with officials from state institutions and the election administration, as well as representatives of political parties, media, civil society and international community. A list of meetings is annexed to this report.

ODIHR would like to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including its Delegation to the OSCE, for their assistance in organizing the visit. ODIHR would also like to thank all of its interlocutors for taking the time to meet with the NAM and for sharing their views.

## **II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

On 5 February, in line with prerogatives granted by the 2016 amendments to the Constitution, the president announced early presidential election to be held on 11 April. President is elected for a seven-year term by an absolute majority of votes cast. If no candidate receives a majority of votes, a second round is held on the second Sunday after the first round between the two candidates with the highest number of votes.

Azerbaijan has a presidential system in which the executive branch exercises wide authority relative to the parliament. The president appoints and chairs the Cabinet of Ministers, and appoints the executive authorities at central and regional level, as well as the Vice Presidents. The president also proposes the judges of the Constitutional Court, Supreme Court, Economic Court, and other courts, as well as the Prosecutor General, to be appointed by the parliament.

Presidential elections are primarily regulated by the Constitution and the Election Code, as well as regulations of the Central Election Commission (CEC). Azerbaijan is party to major international and regional instruments related to the holding of democratic elections. There have been no changes to the Election Code since the last election that address previous ODIHR recommendations including with regard to the conduct of election day activities. The authorities that the ODIHR NAM met with underlined the country's commitment to conduct elections in line with the principles of openness, transparency, fairness, and competitiveness.

The election will be administered by a three-tiered system of commissions, headed by the CEC and including 125 Constituency Election Commissions, and some 5,400 Precinct Election Commissions. The CEC is appointed by the parliament. For all commissions, one third of members

should each represent the parliamentary majority, minority, and independent deputies. Many ODIHR NAM interlocutors were of the opinion that this formula, foreseen by law, in practice limits impartiality of election administration by giving a controlling majority in all commissions to pro-government forces. Moreover, by law, chairpersons of all commissions represent the parliamentary majority.

All citizens over 18 years of age have the right to vote, except those recognized as incapable by a court. Voter registration is passive and the CEC maintains an integrated nationwide voter list. According to the CEC, there are currently some 5.1 million registered voters. Several ODIHR NAM interlocutors raised concerns about the accuracy of the voter lists, noting that the voter list contains substantially fewer people than the number of citizens of voting age, according to the data maintained by the State Statistics Committee.

Candidates may be nominated by registered political parties and coalitions of political parties or run independently. Potential candidate is required to support his/her nomination with signatures from 40,000 voters. Several ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed lack of trust in procedures for verifying signatures. Several opposition parties and movements publicly declared that they will boycott this election and will not put forward candidates. While 15 nominations were approved by the CEC by 24 February, many ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed concerns regarding genuine competitiveness of this election.

Campaign starts from 23 days prior to election day and last until 24 hours before the election day. Campaign events can be held only at specifically assigned venues, indoor and outdoor, determined by the CEC. The campaign is expected to be conducted through meetings with citizens and door-to-door canvassing, but also by disseminating printed materials, as well as through social media and the Internet. Many ODIHR NAM interlocutors stated that the current legal framework and its application impede free campaigning.

Campaign finance legislation sets limits for donations and expenditures and obliges candidates to submit three reports on their campaign finances. The CEC is tasked with oversight of campaign finance. Several ODIHR NAM interlocutors shared their view that the absence of public fundings in elections significantly reduces opportunities for many candidates to run in the election.

Television is widely considered to be the main source of political information, while the use of social media and the Internet continues to increase. The Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, but defamation remains a criminal offense, with a penalty of up to two years in prison. The Election Code provides for free and paid airtime for candidates, under equal conditions. Many ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed lack of trust in media independence.

Jurisdiction over election-related disputes is shared between election administration and judicial bodies. A broad range of electoral stakeholders may file complaints against decisions and actions of election commissions with the higher election commission. Decisions on complaints, as well as decisions and actions of the CEC, can be appealed to the Baku Court of Appeal and, in turn, to the Supreme Court. Many interlocutors that the ODIHR NAM met with raised concerns about the ability of the complaints and appeals system to provide effective remedy, particularly in cases concerning candidate registration.

The Election Code provides for citizen and international election observation, in line with OSCE commitments. Several organizations plan to conduct election observation, exit polls and voter awareness campaign, and to provide free legal aid during election process. Some organizations

informed ODIHR NAM that restrictive legal provisions related to receiving foreign funding will impede their activities during this election.

Most ODIHR NAM interlocutors emphasized the value of an ODIHR election observation activity for this election. Representatives of state institutions stressed their intention to conduct the electoral process transparently, in adherence to international standards for democratic elections, and welcomed observation by ODIHR and any potential recommendations to improve the electoral process. Based on the findings of the ODIHR NAM, a number of electoral issues would benefit from specific attention. These include implementation of electoral legislation, the effectiveness and impartiality of the election administration, the conduct of the campaign and respect for fundamental freedoms, media coverage of the elections, and the administration of election day procedures, including the vote count and tabulation of results.

Based on the findings of this report, the ODIHR NAM recommends the deployment of an Election Observation Mission (EOM) for the upcoming early presidential election. In addition to a core team of experts, the ODIHR NAM will request the secondment by OSCE participating States of 30 long-term observers to follow the electoral process countrywide, as well as 280 short-term observers for the observation of election day procedures. In line with the ODIHR's standard methodology, the EOM will include a media monitoring element.

### III. FINDINGS

#### A. BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

Azerbaijan has a presidential system in which with the executive branch exercises wide authority relative to the parliament. The president appoints and chairs the Cabinet of Ministers, and appoints the executive authorities at central and regional level, as well as the Vice Presidents. The president also proposes the judges of the Constitutional Court, Supreme Court, Economic Court, and other courts, as well as the Prosecutor General, to be appointed by the parliament.

On 26 September 2016, a constitutional referendum took place, upon initiative of the President. Changes to the Constitution extended the presidential term from five to seven years, granted to the president a right to call early presidential election, introduced the offices of the First Vice President and Vice Presidents, and removed the minimum age requirement for presidential candidates. The United Nations Human Rights Committee and the Council of Europe's Venice Commission expressed their concerns over the process of constitutional changes and extension of presidential powers.<sup>1</sup> In February 2017, Mehriban Aliyeva was appointed the First Vice President.

On 5 February, the president declared early presidential election to be held on 11 April.<sup>2</sup> This will be the first presidential election since the 2016 constitutional amendment. While no reason for calling the election early was officially stated, the authorities explained it to ODIHR by a need to avoid an overlap of presidential and parliamentary elections in 2025. While 15 nominations were approved by the CEC by 24 February, including that of the incumbent president, many ODIHR NAM interlocutors did not expect the election to be genuinely competitive, adding that certain imprisoned individuals are prevented from running in the election despite judgments of the European Court of Human

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, UN Human Rights Committee "[Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Azerbaijan](#)" (16 November 2016), CCPR/C/AZE/CO/4, paragraph 6, and Council of Europe's European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) "[Opinion on the Draft Modifications to the Constitution Submitted to the Referendum of 26 September 2016](#)" from 18 October 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Regular term for the presidential election was 17 October 2018.

Rights (ECtHR).<sup>3</sup> Several opposition parties and movements publicly declared that they will boycott this election and will not put forward candidates. While some parties justified it by no desire to participate in a race taking place in a non-competitive environment, others stated that calling the election early made them unable to put forward candidates.

In the parliament (*Milli Majlis*), the ruling New Azerbaijan Party (YAP), chaired by the incumbent, holds 72 out of 125 seats. Twelve more seats are held by parties that formally constitute the parliamentary opposition but largely support YAP, and 40 seats are held by deputies elected as independent candidates, who usually support the ruling party.<sup>4</sup> Women are underrepresented in public life, holding 21 seats in the parliament, 1 out of 14 posts of a chairperson of state committees and no ministerial posts.<sup>5</sup>

The ODIHR has previously observed nine elections in Azerbaijan. The most recent ODIHR Election Observation Mission deployed for the 9 October 2013 presidential election concluded that the election “was undermined by limitations on the freedoms of expression, assembly and association that did not guarantee a level playing field for candidates. Continued allegations of candidate and voter intimidation and a restrictive media environment marred the campaign. Significant shortcomings were observed throughout all stages of election day processes and underscored the serious nature of the shortcomings that need to be addressed in order for Azerbaijan to fully meet its OSCE commitments for genuine and democratic elections”.<sup>6</sup>

## **B. ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

The president is directly elected by popular vote for a seven-year term by an absolute majority of votes cast, with no turnout requirement. In case no candidate receives more than half of the votes, a second round is held on the second Sunday after the first round between the two candidates with the highest number of votes.

Presidential elections are primarily regulated by the Constitution and the Election Code. The Constitution guarantees universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot. Other legislation related to parts of electoral process include the Law on Mass Media, the Law on Mass Events, relevant provisions of the Criminal Code, the Code of Administrative Offences, the Civil Procedure Code and resolutions issued by the Central Election Commission (CEC). Azerbaijan is a party to major international and regional instruments related to the holding of democratic elections.<sup>7</sup>

On 15 December 2017, the parliament amended the Election Code. Some of the changes relate to the need to harmonize provisions of the Election Code with the 2016 amendments to the Constitution, including the provision on the possibility and timeframe of an early presidential election. Other

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<sup>3</sup> See [Ilgar Mammadov v. Azerbaijan](#), No. 919/15 (ECtHR 16 November 2017).

<sup>4</sup> See [stenograms](#) of the parliament. Other parliamentary parties include: Civil Solidarity Party (two deputies), Azerbaijan Social Democratic Party, Civil Unity Party, Democratic Enlightenment Party, Great Structure Party, Motherland Party, National Revival Party, Party of Democratic Reforms, Social Welfare Party, United Azerbaijan Popular Front Party, and Unity Party with one deputy each. One seat is currently vacant.

<sup>5</sup> See also, UN Committee on the Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) “[Concluding Observations on Azerbaijan](#)” (12 March 2015), CEDAW/C/AZE/CO/5, paragraph 26.

<sup>6</sup> See all previous [ODIHR election-related reports on Azerbaijan](#).

<sup>7</sup> Including the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1979 Convention for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 2003 Convention against Corruption, 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the 2002 Convention on the Standards of Democratic Elections, Electoral Rights and Freedoms in the Member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Azerbaijan is also a member of the Council of Europe’s Venice Commission and member of Group of States against corruption (GRECO).

changes include removal of an obligation for candidates to compensate the cost of free air time during the campaign and removal of envelopes for casting ballots on election day.

There have been no changes to the Election Code since the last election that address previous ODIHR recommendations, including with regard to the conduct of election day activities. At the same time, many ODIHR NAM interlocutors shared their concerns on legal restrictions to freedoms of assembly, expression, and association that are pre-requisite for democratic elections.

### C. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The election will be administered by a three-tiered system of election commissions. The election administration comprises the CEC, 125 Constituency Election Commissions (ConECs) and some 5,400 Precinct Election Commissions (PECs).<sup>8</sup> These election commissions are permanent bodies appointed for a five-year term. Eighteen members of the CEC are elected by parliament, ConECs are appointed by the CEC (9 members each), and PECs (6 members each) by the relevant ConECs. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) co-ordinates out-of-country voting in some 40 polling stations that will be established abroad.

According to the Election Code, the composition of all election commissions reflects the representation of political forces in the parliament: three equal quotas are reserved for members nominated by the parliamentary majority, the parliamentary minority (defined as the remaining political parties represented in the parliament), and parliamentarians elected as independent candidates. Many ODIHR NAM interlocutors opined that this formula, foreseen by law, in practice limits impartiality of election administration by giving a decisive majority in all commissions to the pro-government forces. Moreover, by law, chairpersons of all commissions represent the parliamentary majority.

Three out of 18 members of the CEC are women. At the ConEC and PEC levels, 17 and 36 per cent of members, respectively, are women.

The CEC is responsible for the overall conduct of the election, including the registration of candidates, maintenance of the nationwide voter list and the review of complaints against ConEC decisions. It is also in charge of campaign finance and media oversight during the campaign. The CEC informed the ODIHR NAM that preparations for the election are ongoing according to the electoral calendar, including training of election officials and dissemination of voter information materials.<sup>9</sup> The CEC website provides a range of election-related information to the public. The CEC informed ODIHR NAM of its decision to install 1,000 web cameras at polling stations around the country, as in previous elections, with a view to enhance transparency of the process.

The CEC noted to the ODIHR NAM its commitment to conduct election in a professional and effective manner, stating that it is well resourced and prepared for this duty despite the election being called early.

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<sup>8</sup> The CEC informed ODIHR NAM that it is making necessary arrangements to ensure voting rights of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). This includes establishing 510 polling stations for IDPs. Additionally, a number of special polling stations will be established in military units, prisons, hospitals and other locations.

<sup>9</sup> See [electoral calendar](#), adopted by the CEC on 6 February 2018.

## D. VOTER REGISTRATION

All citizens who are 18 or older by election day have the right to vote, except those recognized as incapable by a court decision.<sup>10</sup> Voter registration is based on extracts of local residency data provided to the CEC who maintains an integrated nationwide voter list. Voter lists are updated annually on 30 May by the PECs and updated no later than 25 days before the election day. From this date until and including on election day, voters can be added to supplementary voter lists at the PECs upon presenting a proof of residency. Citizens are able to check their registration at any time through the CEC website, by telephone, or in person at the PECs.

For this election, the CEC plans to finalize voter list by 3 March and then send extracts to ConECs to be distributed to PECs for public scrutiny. According to the CEC, there are currently some 5.1 million registered voters.<sup>11</sup> However, several ODIHR NAM interlocutors raised concerns about the accuracy of the voter lists, noting the number of voters in the lists is substantially lower than the number of citizens of voting age, according to the data maintained by the State Statistics Committee.

## E. CANDIDATE NOMINATION AND REGISTRATION

In addition to the requirements for being a voter, presidential candidates are required to be permanently resident in Azerbaijan for at least 10 years and have a university degree, and cannot have dual citizenship, any liabilities before other states or a previous conviction for a serious crime. While the age requirement was removed from the Constitution in 2016, the education and residence requirements remain.<sup>12</sup>

Candidates may be nominated by registered political parties and coalitions of political parties or run independently based on a nomination by a group of voters or through self-nomination. The period of candidate registration started after the election was formally called on 5 February and will last up to 30 days prior to the election. Each potential candidate must first submit a set of documents established by the Election Code to the CEC which has five days to approve the nomination. Next, a prospective candidate has to collect 40,000 signatures of registered voters, with a minimum of 50 signatures from at least 60 out of 125 constituencies. Signatures should be submitted between 50 and 30 days before the election.

The CEC should decide on candidacy within seven days of receiving collected signatures. The verification of submitted signatures is conducted by a CEC working group of experts, comprising authorized graphologists, CEC members and staff. By law, prospective candidates and their authorized representatives should be notified about the signature verification and have the right to be present at the working group sessions. After finishing the verification process, the working group should issue an opinion on its outcome for each candidate, which forms the basis for the CEC decision. Many ODIHR NAM interlocutors shared their concerns regarding the signature

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<sup>10</sup> The UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) has recommended Azerbaijan to “remove restrictions and immediately restore the right to vote for persons deprived of legal capacity”. See, CRPD “[Concluding Observations on Azerbaijan](#)” (12 May 2014), CRPD/C/AZE/CO/1, paragraph 45.

<sup>11</sup> This number does not include voters abroad and those assigned to special polling stations.

<sup>12</sup> Paragraph 15 of the 1996 [UN Human Rights Committee General Comment No 25](#) states that “...Persons who are otherwise eligible to stand for election should not be excluded by unreasonable or discriminatory requirements such as education, residence or descent, or by reason of political affiliation”. Paragraph 24 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document provides that restrictions on rights and freedoms must be “strictly proportionate to the aim of the law”.



verification procedures, noting problems encountered during previous elections and referencing judgments by the ECtHR in that respect.<sup>13</sup>

## F. ELECTION CAMPAIGN

By law, campaign period starts from 23 days prior to election day and lasts until 24 hours before the election day. Campaign events can be held only at specifically assigned venues throughout the country, indoor and outdoor, determined by the CEC.

The YAP informed the ODIHR NAM that it plans active nationwide campaign for its candidate, primarily through meetings with citizens and door-to-door canvassing, but also by disseminating materials, and using social media and the Internet. YAP campaign will focus on the achievements of the incumbent president with regard to welfare and economic development. Some opposition parties that the ODIHR NAM met with noted their plans to organize public events and rallies to protest against early presidential election and to call for boycott.

Many ODIHR NAM interlocutors stated that the current legal framework and its application impede free campaigning, specifically noting their concerns about limitations to fundamental freedoms of assembly and association.<sup>14</sup> They also noted difficulties experienced in organizing public gatherings between elections, being confined to only one venue for conducting rallies in Baku, which is subject to extensive security measures and surveillance, as well as many cases of their activists being detained for attending registered events at the approved venues.

## G. CAMPAIGN FINANCE

The Election Code regulates the campaign finance and provides that presidential candidates can finance their campaigns exclusively from private funds. Prospective candidates have to open a special bank account at least 24 hours before starting to collect voters' signatures. Individuals and legal entities can donate up to AZN 3,000 and AZN 50,000, respectively, to a candidate.<sup>15</sup> In addition, nominating party or coalition can support its candidate with maximum of AZN 250,000. The fund for expenditures of a candidate cannot exceed AZN 10 million. The law prohibits contributions from foreign countries and citizens, international organizations, state bodies and municipalities, charitable organizations and anonymous entities. Several ODIHR NAM interlocutors shared their view that the absence of public fundings in elections significantly reduces opportunities for many candidates to run in the election.

The CEC oversees the campaign finance. Candidates report to the CEC on campaign finance contributions and expenditures on three occasions: an initial report at the time of registration; an interim report between 10 and 20 days prior to election day; and a final report no later than 10 days after the publication of the final election results. Candidate campaign finances are not subject to an audit at any stage of the election process.

The 2017 amendment to the Law on Political Parties introduced an obligation for parties to submit their annual financial reports by 1 April every year to the CEC who should make these reports public. The CEC informed the ODIHR NAM that it decided to publish these reports within three days from their submission in order to contribute to transparency of party financing.

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<sup>13</sup> See, for example, [Tahirov v. Azerbaijan](#), App no 31953/11 (ECtHR, 11 June 2015).

<sup>14</sup> In addition, see also the UN Human Rights Committee "[Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Azerbaijan](#)" (16 November 2016), CCPR/C/AZE/CO/4, paragraphs 38, 40 and 42.

<sup>15</sup> AZN 1 is approximately EUR 0.48.

## H. MEDIA

Freedom of expression, media freedom and the right of access to information are guaranteed in the Constitution, but defamation remains a criminal offense, also applicable to the online content, with a penalty of up to two years in prison. In March 2017, the Law on Information, Information Provision and Protection of Information was amended, granting right to the the Ministry of Transportation, Communications and High Technologies to block websites of media outlets because of their content, without any court decision. At the moment, according to ODIHR NAM interlocutors, there is a number of websites blocked, and appeals are pending with the court. At the same time, online activists are increasingly exposed to detention and intimidation, since defamation provisions are explicitly applicable to the internet content as well.<sup>16</sup> The honour and dignity of the president are protected by Criminal Law and Constitution. The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) and the UN Human Rights Committee have expressed their concerns in respect of restrictive measures detrimental to journalists' freedom and safety, defamation and extensive restrictions on freedom of expression in practice.<sup>17</sup>

Television is widely considered to be the main source of political information, while the use of social media and the Internet for this purpose continues to increase. There are 11 nationwide television channels, including the national broadcaster (ITV). Many ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed lack of trust in media independence and their capacity to provide balanced and fair political coverage.

The Election Code provides for free and paid airtime for candidates, under equal conditions. Once the campaign starts, the ITV will allocate three hours of free airtime per week on TV and radio respectively. This time will be equally divided among registered candidates and will be used either for debates among them or for their individual presentations. Newspapers funded from state budget (Azerbaijan, *Khalq qazeti* and *Bakinskiy Rabochiy*) dedicate ten per cent of their space on weekly basis to candidates, free of charge. Media outlets are obliged to inform the CEC if they intend to offer paid airtime to candidates, and to publish the conditions and price list for these services.

The ITV informed the ODIHR NAM that, although challenging, it will strive to distinguish coverage of the incumbent president in his official capacity from reporting on his activities as a candidate. The CEC formed a working group which is tasked to oversee the compliance of media coverage of the election with the law.

## I. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Complaints and appeals can be filed by voters, candidates, political parties and coalitions and their representatives, observers and election commissions. Actions and decisions as well as omissions of election commissions that violate electoral rights can be challenged with the higher election commission. Decisions of election commissions upon complaints, as well as decisions and actions of the CEC, can be appealed to the Baku Court of Appeal and, in turn, to the Supreme Court. The timeframe for submitting a complaint or appeal is three days from the day a violation occurred or a decision was adopted or published, or the day the plaintiff was informed of the decision. Complaints and appeals lodged before election day should be reviewed and decided upon within three days; complaints and appeals submitted on or after election day should be reviewed and decided upon immediately.

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<sup>16</sup> See, for example statement of the OSCE RFoM from [6 March 2017](#).

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, statements of the OSCE RFoM from [18 December 2017](#) and [12 January 2018](#) and the UN Human Rights Committee "[Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Azerbaijan](#)" (16 November 2016), CCPR/C/AZE/CO/4, paragraph 36.

The Election Code foresees the creation of expert groups at the CEC and ConEC levels for adjudication of electoral disputes, consisting of nine and three members, respectively. The law does not, however, provide any criteria for the appointment of these experts and only states that commissioners with legal background may be members of these groups. Many interlocutors that the ODIHR NAM met with raised lack of confidence in the ability of the complaints and appeals system to provide effective remedy, particularly in cases concerning candidate registration.

#### **J. ELECTION OBSERVATION**

The Election Code provides for citizen and international election observation, in line with OSCE commitments. In addition, candidates can have their authorized representatives follow the election process at all levels. Several civil society organizations informed ODIHR NAM that their observation activities already started while others shared their plans to conduct election observation, exit polls and voter awareness campaigns, and to provide free legal aid during the election process. Some organizations informed ODIHR NAM that restrictive legal provisions related to receiving foreign funding will impede their activities during this election.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Most ODIHR NAM interlocutors emphasized the value of an ODIHR election observation activity for this election. Representatives of state institutions stressed their intention to conduct the electoral process transparently, in adherence to international standards for democratic elections, and welcomed observation by ODIHR and any potential recommendations to improve the electoral process. Based on the findings of the ODIHR NAM, a number of electoral issues would benefit from specific attention. These include implementation of electoral legislation, the effectiveness and impartiality of the election administration, the conduct of the campaign and respect for fundamental freedoms, media coverage of the elections, and the administration of election day procedures, including the vote count and tabulation of results.

Based on the findings of this report, the ODIHR NAM recommends the deployment of an Election Observation Mission (EOM) for the upcoming early presidential election. In addition to a core team of experts, the ODIHR NAM will request the secondment by OSCE participating States of 30 long-term observers to follow the electoral process countrywide, as well as 280 short-term observers for the observation of election day procedures. In line with the ODIHR's standard methodology, the EOM will include a media monitoring element.

## **ANNEX: LIST OF MEETINGS**

### **Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

Mahmud Mammad-Guliyev, Vice-Minister

Fakhraddin Ismayiov, Head, Human Rights and Democracy Department

Aysel Yagubova, Head of the Division of Democracy and Rule of Law, Human Rights and Democracy Department

Vugar Gafarov, Third Secretary, Human Rights and Democracy Department

### **Parliamentary Committee for Legal Policy and State Building**

Ali Huseynov, Chairperson

Vusal Huseynov, Member

Malahat Ibrahimqizi, Member

Elshan Musayev, Member

### **Baku Court of Appeal**

Iman Nagiyev, Chairperson

### **Central Election Commission**

Mazahir Panahov, Chairperson

Rovzat Gasimov, Head of Secretariat

Rashid Yusifbayli, Head of International Relations Department

### **National Television and Radio Council**

Nushiravan Maharramov, Chairperson

Togrul Mammadov, Head of Administration

### **Public Broadcaster (ITV)**

Jamil Guliyev, General Director

Anar Yusifoglu, Head, Department for Public-Political Programs

### **Political Parties**

Ali Kerimli, Chairperson, Azerbaijan Popular Front Party

Sabir Rustamkhanli, Chairperson, Civic Solidarity Party

Asim Mollazade, Chairperson, Democratic Reforms Party

Fazil Mustafa, Chairperson, Great Structure Party

Arif Hajili, Chairperson, Musavat Party

Jamil Hasanli, Chairperson, National Council of Democratic Forces

Ali Ahmadov, Deputy Chairperson, New Azerbaijan Party

Siyavush Novruzov, Deputy Executive Secretary, New Azerbaijan Party

Sevinj Fataliyeva, Member of Parliament, New Azerbaijan Party

Natig Jafarli, Executive Secretary, REAL Movement

### **Media**

Khadija Ismayil, Investigative journalist

Mehman Aliyev, Turan News Agency

Rovshan Hajibayli, Azadliq newspaper

Aynur Elgunash, Investigative journalist

Elchin Shikhli, Ayna Newspaper

### **Civil Society**

Maharram Zulfugarli, Association for Civil Society Development in Azerbaijan  
Vugar Bayramov, Centre for Economic and Social Development  
Mirali Huseynov, Denicracy Learning Public Association  
Hafiz Hasanov, Law and Development Public Association  
Mammad Mammadzade, Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Centre  
Irada Yagubova, “ELS” Independent Research Centre  
Akif Gurbanov, Institute for Democratic Initiatives  
Alasgar Mammadli, Media Lawyer  
Alimammad Nuriyev, Research Fund “Constitution”

### **International Community**

Augusto Massari, Ambassador, Embassy of Italy  
Wolfgang Marchardt, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Austria  
Bert Schoofs, Ambassador, Embassy of Belgium  
Refik Šabanović, Ambassador, Embassy of Croatia  
Peter Wagner, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Czech Republic  
Constance Seignovert, Counsellor, Embassy of France  
Michael Kindsgrab, Ambassador, Embassy of Germany  
Kostantions Adamopoulos, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Greece  
Viktor Szederkenyi, Ambassador, Embassy of Hungary  
Juris Maklakovs, Ambassador, Embassy of Latvia  
Valdas Lastauskas, Ambassador, Embassy of Lithuania  
Zorena Muzak, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Moldova  
Onno Kervers, Ambassador, Embassy of Netherlands  
Bard Ivar Svendsen, Ambassador, Embassy of Norway  
Marek Janusz Calka, Ambassador, Embassy of Poland  
Dan Iancu, Ambassador, Embassy of Romania  
Yana Ragozina, Second Secretary, Embassy of Russian Federation  
Nebojša Rodić, Ambassador, Embassy of Serbia  
Ignacio Sachez Taboada, Ambassador, Embassy of Spain  
Ingrid Tersman, Ambassador, Embassy of Sweden  
Philipp Stalder, Ambassador, Embassy of Switzerland  
Rustam Soliyev, Ambassador, Embassy of Tajikistan  
Volkan Ozkiper, First Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Turkey  
Valentina Bokova, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Ukraine  
Carole Mary Crofts, Ambassador, Embassy of the United Kingdom  
Robert Cekuta, Ambassador, Embassy of the United States of America  
Sharzod M. Fayziyev, Ambassador, Embassy of Uzbekistan  
Kestutis Jankaukas, Head, Delegation of the European Union to Azerbaijan  
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