



Tbilisi, 31 May 2010

Ad-hoc delegation to Georgia

Declaration

A Delegation of four Members of the European Parliament travelled to Georgia on the occasion of the local elections.

Before the election day, the Delegation, Chaired by Mr. Brok (EPP, DE) with the participation of Mr. Swoboda (S&D, AT), Mr. Lisek (EPP, PL), Mrs. Nicolai (ALDE, RO), had the opportunity to hold meetings with the relevant stakeholders involved in the elections, the OSCE/ODIHR, Central Election Commission, Inter-Agency Task Force, media and civil society. At the political level, the Delegation met with the President, the President of the Parliament, members of government and representatives of the opposition.

A number of improvements have occurred in the first elections organised with the amended Election Code and with the practice seen. Progress has been made in the preparation of the elections by the Central Election Commission and the positive work of the Inter-Agency Task Force has to be underlined. Access to media was granted to all running candidates.

With regard to the Election Day, the Delegation visited more than 25 polling stations in Tbilisi and other regions, including special polling stations for military and police. The Delegation noted that the process was well organised, without tensions, and managed in a quiet, peaceful and orderly manner. The Delegation welcomed the presence of party and civil society observers in every polling station visited and the use of minority languages in the relevant areas.

A certain number of improvements still remain to be considered. The Election Code still shows some disparities and inconsistencies. In particular, the number of supporters needed to register a party seems rather onerous for local elections, as is the lack of the possibility for individual candidates to run. The need for special polling stations for military and police should be reconsidered. Furthermore, the appeals and complaints procedures could be clarified and better separation between party and administrative resources should be sought in the future. These steps could enhance voter confidence in view of next important electoral processes.

In conclusion, the delegation would like to stress that:

- these elections have represented a real step toward the democratic development of the country;
- besides the needed economic and social reforms, the development of democracy would be seen as an important element of stabilisation and attraction in the region;
- the ongoing process of constitutional reforms, including the electoral reform, should be pursued as an important priority by the Georgian authorities.

The European Parliament will closely follow the developments in the country and in the region in the forthcoming months and remains committed to further enhance its relations with Georgia.