



## **INTERNATIONAL OBSERVATION MISSION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF TURKIC-SPEAKING COUNTRIES**

**Early Parliamentary Elections, Republic of Azerbaijan - 9 February, 2020**

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### **STATEMENT**

Following the invitation from the Parliament of Azerbaijan, the International Observation Mission (hereinafter referred to as the Mission) of the Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic Speaking Countries (TURKPA) conducted short-term monitoring of the Early Parliamentary Elections in Azerbaijan on 9 February 2020. The Mission is comprised of the members of parliaments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey and diplomatic staff of the TURKPA Secretariat.

The Mission's programme included meetings with officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Central Election Commission, as well as the observation of the voting process on the election day.

Parliamentary 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 the electoral process includes 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 of the Central Election Commission. Azerbaijan is a party to major international and regional instruments related to the holding of democratic elections.

The national legislation provides for free and equal media coverage of candidates that, apart from the Election Code, are regulated by the Law on Television and Radio Broadcasting. Mass media provides coverage of pre-election campaigns based on the principles of impartiality, truthfulness and accuracy. The candidates were granted equal conditions to conduct agitation work through the mass media and the possibility to hold meetings with voters.

During the meeting with the Chairman of CEC Mr. Mazahir Panahov, the Mission members were informed on preparations for the elections that included the elaboration of rules and regulations, organization of training for lower-level commissions and law-enforcement bodies, registration of voters and candidates and review of complaints. According to the information of CEC, there are 5, 329461 million registered voters and all voters are able to check their registration at any time through the CEC website, by telephone or in-person at the Precinct Election Commissions. The CEC registered 1321 candidates contesting elections and 19 political parties.

The Mission's members visited 10 polling stations both in the capital city Baku, and in other regions - Shemakhi and Gobustan, having observed the voting process at different stages. The Mission had an opportunity to monitor the casting of votes, talk to voters, polling stations' officials and also to other international observers on the ground. The Mission also held the meetings with the representatives of local executive bodies of Shamakhi and Gobustan cities and was given information on the electoral process in the relevant regions.

According to the preliminary information of the Central Election Commission, voter turnout was 47,81 %<sup>1</sup>.

The Mission notes the increasing role of social media, where candidates held an active campaign and opportunity to communicate with a broad audience. As a result, voters were well informed of platforms of candidates, their goals and objectives.

The Mission observed that there is wide participation of women and young people in the elections, as a result of encouraging measures of the Government of Azerbaijan aimed to provide a more inclusive representation of all segments of society in public life.

The entire election process was conducted in a transparent manner, meanwhile the society has a heightened interest in the elections and the CEC has always informed the public in due course on all the matters related to the electoral process.

The Mission emphasizes that the Central Election Commission had made necessary arrangements to facilitate the exercise of voting rights for internally displaced persons (IDPs).

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<sup>1</sup> This figure on the voter turnout was officially declared by CEC on the 9 February evening

Polling stations within constituencies not under or only partially under government control have been relocated to constituencies across the country where IDPs reside. For these elections, 10 ConECs with 573 polling stations served IDPs.

The Mission has not observed any significant violations or deviations from the legal framework and election procedure was administered in conformity with the national legislation of Azerbaijan and its international commitments. The Mission noticed that all the bodies of election administration were well-resourced and professionally prepared for the conduct of elections. This aspect is exemplified by the installation of web-cameras at polling stations and the creation of necessary conditions for citizens with physical disabilities, as it was during the presidential elections in 2018. The Mission also welcomes the application of devices at the polling stations reading chips on the new IDs of the citizens of Azerbaijan that can be assessed as another technological improvement in election administration.

All the legal and logistical conditions were provided for international observation of elections in Azerbaijan. The Mission followed the objectivity, justness, transparency and impartiality principles confirmed by the relevant international instruments.

The Mission concludes that the early parliamentary elections in the Republic of Azerbaijan of 9 February 2020 were held in compliance with the national legislation of Azerbaijan and international election standards.