



**Press-release of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the
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Parliamentary Elections in Azerbaijan: a Milestone on the Path of Democracy

On November 6, 2005 elections were conducted in the Republic of Azerbaijan for 125-member strong unicameral Parliament.

With voters' attendance close to 47% and a number of innovations introduced for the first time in Azerbaijan's 15 years of independence, these elections re-affirmed a resolute departure from the ways and practices of the past. With a sound legislative basis enhanced considerably by President Aliyev's May 11 and October 25 Executive Orders, the elections featured a number of pre-election and election-day practices of advanced democratic nature, for the first time applied in Azerbaijan, including use of voter-cards, publishing voters' lists, inking voters' fingers to prevent multiple voting, conducting independent exit-polls, lifting remaining restrictions on monitoring the election by some foreign entity-sponsored local NGOs, etc.

Encouraging steps by the Government also included permitting opposition and ruling parties to hold public rallies on equal conditions, providing both free and paid air time for all candidates irrespective of their views and political affiliation, warning local executive authorities against any interference into the process, and resulted in creating conditions of transparency and fairness, thus allowing for over 2,000 of registered candidates.

On the election day, witnessed by some 1,500 international and about 17,000 local observers, the electorate's will was manifested clearly and freely, showing improvements over previous votes, as indicated by the monitors of International Election Observation Mission, despite a few reported cases of irregularities, now dealt with in an appropriate manner by the Azerbaijani authorities. As stated by the President of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev on November 7th, the monitors' opinion "will be duly noted, provisions of the preliminary findings will be studied thoroughly and serious action will be taken".

The outcome of the elections was generally supported by the independent polls, enhancing solid basis for the continuation of democratic transformation of the country.

The Government of Azerbaijan hopes for the international community's timely assistance and expertise in supporting its efforts towards full elimination of outstanding problems.

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