

Joint Statement on the First and Second Rounds of Bashkan Elections in the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia within the Republic of Moldova

We welcome the commitments made by the Government of Moldova and local authorities in Gagauzia that the December 3, 2006, elections and any possible run-off elections for Gagauz Governor (Bashkan) be held in accordance with international standards for democratic elections. In our judgment, the first round of voting was generally conducted in an orderly manner and was a clear improvement in comparison with earlier elections in Gagauzia.

The Heads of Mission signatories to this statement recognize the efforts of the Government of Moldova, local authorities in Gagauzia, and the Gagauz Central Electoral Commission in undertaking to ensure that the December 3 elections reflected the will of Gagauz voters. This serves as further proof that strong regional autonomy can exist within a democratic, sovereign, and territorially whole Republic of Moldova.

As we approach the December 17 run-off election, we note concerns about the conduct of the first round of elections, and call authorities' attention to the importance of correcting some of the problems cited by Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE), the OSCE Mission to Moldova, and local and international observers during the first round, such as unequal campaign conditions and preferential access to media, as well as the inaccuracy of voting lists.

These elections are an important opportunity to demonstrate to all throughout Moldova and to the international community that the Republic of Moldova respects and enforces the principles of autonomy, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

We support these efforts as a crucial step toward strengthening Moldovan democratic institutions and Gagauz regional autonomy within a democratic, sovereign, and territorially whole Republic of Moldova.

We therefore, again, urge all authorities to ensure full respect for the law on elections of the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia within the Republic of Moldova, and to make the second round of elections genuinely free, fair and democratic.

Chisinau, 7 December 2006

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OSCE Mission to Moldova