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## **EURASIA FOUNDATION: CONDUCT OF GAGAUZ-YERI ELECTION IMPROVED THANKS TO CIVIL SOCIETY EFFORTS**

Chisinau, Moldova – Voting took place yesterday to elect a governor of the Gagauz-Yeri Autonomy, a region of Moldova. Eurasia Foundation Moldova (EFM) held a press conference today to announce the preliminary results of grass-roots initiatives undertaken by the League for Defence of Human Rights in Moldova (LADOM), the Association for Participatory Democracy ADEPT and the Association of Independent Press (API).

Announced at the press conference were the preliminary results of a parallel vote tabulation carried out by LADOM: with 98.44% of ballots processed, LADOM reported that Mihai Formuzal received 33.99% of the vote; Nicolae Dudoglo – 31.42%, the incumbent, Gheorghe Tabunscic – 23.96%; and Alexander Stoianoglo – 10.62%. As of December 4th, Gagauz election officials have not yet announced the results. Should no candidate receive over 50% of the vote, a second round of voting between the two leading candidates will take place, likely on December 17th.

According to Paul Strutescu of LADOM, voting took place mostly in accordance with international standards. According to LADOM's report "the atmosphere in polling stations was calm, and people were not prevented from voting. While observers registered some irregularities, they were not of the sort that would influence the outcome of the election." On the other hand, the media failed to provide fair and balanced coverage during the pre-election campaign, according to Petru Macovei from API. Macovei stated that public and independent media outlets exhibited favourable bias toward one candidate or another.

Igor Botan of ADEPT concluded that the election was conducted better than previous elections in the Gagauz-Yeri Autonomy and stressed the unprecedented voter turnout – over 60% of eligible voters. "This represents an increase of almost 20%," he said.

Sorin Mereacre, EF Country Director for Moldova, noted "I applaud the dedicated young people who acted as long-term and short-term observers during this election, and am happy to see the Free and Fair Elections Program gave them an opportunity to participate in the democratic process. Investing in young people is one way to build a democratic future for Gagauzians."

EFM Elections Program Manager Radivoje Grujic expressed his appreciation for the efforts of EFM's NGO partners over the last five months, adding "The Gagauz elections have been a positive step forward for civil society's efforts to promote free and fair elections in Moldova. We look forward to building on this momentum in the run up to nation-wide local elections in 2007."

EFM launched its Free and Fair Election of the Governor of Gagauz –Yeri project in October 2006. The project aims to raise the standards to which elections are conducted in accordance with internationally recognized values. The project also works to raise awareness among citizens and authorities of the importance of holding free and fair elections. The project is made possible by financial support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida/Asdi), USAID, and the National Endowment for Democracy.

For more information about elections in Gagauzia visit [www.alegeri.md](http://www.alegeri.md). For more information about the Eurasia Foundation's programs in Moldova, contact Liliana Vițu, Program/Communications Officer, Tel: 235343; Fax: 548102, Mobile: 069149217; Email: [lvitu@eurasia.md](mailto:lvitu@eurasia.md)

