

**Declaration of the PACE delegation: low turnout of the Constitutional Referendum in Moldova**

Strasbourg, 06.09.2010 – A delegation from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) has observed the constitutional referendum in Moldova on 5 September. This delegation was the only European parliamentary organisation to observe this referendum.

The delegation considered that the voting day was calm and orderly. The citizens who participated in the referendum could in general make their choice freely. However, this delegation regrets the low turnout. It is now up to political stakeholders, regardless of their political positions, to propose solutions to make the functioning of institutions more stable in the general interest of the country and to look beyond their personal or political quarrels.

A referendum is a democratic exercise which is not only limited to the voting day. The referendum campaign took place in the context of the political and institutional crisis which followed the 2009 Parliamentary elections. The delegation noted that the referendum campaign had been negatively affected by constant accusations by political stakeholders of different sides who were responsible for the political crisis.

The observation delegation notes however with satisfaction that this did not have a negative impact on the behaviour of the supporters either “for” or “against” the referendum, and there were no cases of violence reported during the campaign.

The election administration generally demonstrated professionalism and acted in a transparent way. The delegation welcomes the efforts to improve the quality of the voters’ list. However, significant problems with accuracy of voters’ register continue to persist.

The observation delegation welcomes the authorities’ efforts aimed at facilitating the participation of the citizens of Moldova, including those citizens residing in foreign countries.

The media coverage was generally well balanced, reflecting different points of view. PACE delegation notes with satisfaction the improvements in media coverage of the pre-referendum campaign.

According to the PACE delegation, the recommendation by some political parties to boycott the referendum contributed in part to the non-participation of a significant number of voters.

The PACE delegation stresses the fact that, contrary to the case of elections, it is not completely prohibited for the authorities to intervene in order to support the proposal submitted to referendum. Nevertheless, the delegation strongly condemns all attempts aiming to influence the outcome of the referendum by the authorities (national, regional or local) using excessive and one-sided campaigning or by any other means.

The PACE delegation calls on the authorities of Moldova to hold early parliamentary elections in 2010 as the political stakeholders of Moldova committed themselves towards the Council of Europe. This is to ensure all necessary conditions for the free expression of the will of all citizens of Moldova.

This delegation expects all political leaders to resolve the political and constitutional deadlock on the election of the President of the Republic of Moldova.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe will follow closely the further developments in Moldova through its monitoring procedure and will observe the forthcoming elections in 2010.

The complete report on the observation of the constitutional referendum on 5 September will be adopted by the Assembly in the 2010 October part-session (4-8 October 2010) in Strasbourg.