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Observation of the parliamentary elections in Turkey (12 June 2011)

Election observation report
Bureau of the Assembly
Rapporteur: Ms Kerstin LUNDGREN, Sweden, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

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1. Introduction

1. The Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly, at its meeting on 10 March 2011, decided – subject to the receipt of an invitation from the competent Turkish authorities – to observe the parliamentary elections to be held in Turkey on 12 June 2011.

2. The Bureau constituted an ad hoc committee for this purpose, composed of 30 members, and authorised a pre-electoral mission composed of five members (one from each political group) to be carried out approximately one month before the elections. The Bureau appointed me as Chairperson of the ad hoc committee.

3. On 8 April 2011, the Chairperson of the Turkish delegation to the Assembly, Mr Erol Aslan Cebeci, extended a formal invitation to observe the elections.

4. Based on proposals by the political groups in the Assembly, the ad hoc committee was composed as follows:

– Group of the European People's Party (EPP/CD):

- Pedro AGRAMUNT, Spain

- Jean-Charles GARDETTO, Monaco
- Pavol KUBOVIČ, Slovak Republic
- Janusz RACHOŃ, Poland
- Giacomo SANTINI, Italy
- Giuseppe SARO, Italy
- Leander SCHÄDLER, Liechtenstein
- Elkhan SULEYMANOV, Azerbaijan
- Latchezar TOSHEV*, Bulgaria

– Socialist Group (SOC):

- Arcadio DÍAZ TEJERA, Spain
- Andreas GROSS, Switzerland
- Josette DURRIEU, France
- Pietro MARCENARO, Italy
- Patrick MORIAU, Belgium
- Lord John TOMLINSON, United Kingdom
- Marek WIKIÍNSKI, Poland
- Gisela WURM, Austria

– Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE):

- Michael HANCOCK, United Kingdom
- Rafael HUSEYNOV, Azerbaijan
- Kerstin LUNDGREN, Sweden
- Andrea RIGONI, Italy
- Chiora TAKTAKISHVILI, Georgia

– European Democrat Group (EDG):

- Zmago JELENČIČ PLEMENITI, Slovenia
- Sergey MARKOV, Russian Federation
- Ganira PASHAYEVA, Azerbaijan
- Ivan SAVVIDI, Russian Federation

– Group of the Unified European Left (UEL):

- Andrej HUNKO, Germany

* only participated in the pre-electoral mission

5. The Secretariat support was provided by Mr Vladimir Dronov, Head of Secretariat, Interparliamentary Cooperation and Election Observation, Mr Bogdan Torcatoriu, Administrative Officer, Ms Danièle Gastl and Ms Nicola Stemp, Assistants. Mr Dronov and Ms Gastl also took part in the pre-electoral mission.

6. The pre-electoral mission took place on 17 and 18 May 2011, with the participation of Mr Toshev, Mr Díaz Tejera, Mr Hunko and myself. Regrettably, the European Democrat Group was not represented due to a last-minute cancellation.

7. The pre-electoral delegation had meetings with the Chairperson of the Supreme Board of Elections (SBE), representatives of political parties running in these elections, and the European Union Ambassador to Turkey, as well as with a cross-section of civil society and the media. The working programme of the pre-electoral delegation appears in Appendix 1.

8. The findings and conclusions of the pre-electoral delegation are reflected in its press statement issued at a press conference at the end of the visit (Appendix 2).

9. The ad hoc committee visited Ankara from 9 to 13 June 2011 and had a similar briefing programme (Appendix 3).

10. For the briefing programme, the ad hoc committee was joined by an observer delegation from the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE.

11. On the election day, the ad hoc committee split into 16 teams which observed the elections in and around Ankara, Antalya, Diyarbakir, Gaziantep, Istanbul, Izmir, Trabzon and Van. Altogether, the voting and vote count were observed in more than 180 polling stations.

12. The ad hoc committee concluded that the 12 June 2011 parliamentary elections in Turkey were, well-managed, democratic and they demonstrated pluralism. However, it considered there is still a need for improvements on fundamental freedoms. The press statement issued the day after the elections appears in Appendix 4

13. The ad hoc committee wishes to thank the Turkish authorities, in particular the Turkish delegation to the Assembly, for the support and co-operation given to the ad hoc committee in accomplishing its mission.

2. Political and legal context

14. On 3 March 2011, the Turkish unicameral parliament (the Grand National Assembly) set the date for parliamentary elections for 12 June 2011, in order to elect its 550 members for a four-year term.

15. In 2007, three political parties had cleared the 10% electoral threshold for parliamentary representation. The Justice and Development Party (AKP) gained the largest number of mandates – 341 – allowing it to form a majority government and to elect its candidate as President in August 2007. The Republican People's Party (CHP) obtained 99 seats and became the main opposition party, followed by the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) with 70 seats. Twenty-six independent candidates were also elected, 20 of which represented the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP), and formed their own political group. However, the Constitutional Court banned the DTP in December 2009; most of the parliamentarians concerned subsequently joined the successor Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) and again formed a parliamentary group. The remainder of the seats were split among smaller parties and independent candidates.

16. The legal framework for the conduct of elections includes the Constitution and a range of special laws. The former was amended in the years following the 2007 elections. In addition, provisions related to the disclosure and scrutiny of political party finances were further detailed, clearer regulations on media obligations and the use of printed campaign materials were introduced, parties were granted the right to receive copies of protocols at all polling stations, and the restriction on the use of languages other than Turkish was eased.

17. However, certain restrictive elements that were deemed problematic in the 2007 elections have not undergone significant revision and continue to constrain, in particular, the activities of the media and political parties. The Turkish legal framework continues to prohibit, in a manner deemed disproportionate by many, activities that might be perceived as insulting "Turkishness", state bodies and institutions, national and moral values of the community and reforms and principles of Atatürk, inciting enmity or hatred among the population, and promoting terrorist organisations. These provisions, therefore, continue to constrain activities of the media and political parties, in particular, as shown in a number of cases filed against Turkey with the European Court of Human Rights (hereafter "the Court") on freedom of expression, association and assembly.

18. In January 2011, the Parliamentary Assembly expressed its concern with regard to the delayed implementation by Turkey of Court decisions and pointing to "major systemic deficiencies" that caused repeated violations of the European Convention on Human Rights (Resolution 1787 (2011)).

19. In March 2011, the European Parliament also called on the Turkish authorities to adjust legislation to comply with Court decisions (European Parliament Resolution of 9 March 2011 on Turkey's 2010 Progress Report (P7-TA-Prov (2011) 090)).

20. In September 2010, a referendum initiated by the AKP was held and resulted in the adoption of a number of important constitutional changes. While the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) was not officially asked for its opinion on the proposal, the relevant text was prepared taking into account reports and opinions of the Venice Commission. The Venice Commission was asked by the Ministry of Justice to assist in the drafting of the implementing legislation. The authorities presented this as bringing the Constitution into compliance with European standards, improving respect for individual and human rights, increasing access of the public to courts, limiting the power of military courts and paving the

way for reform of the judiciary. Opponents of the referendum, for their part, regarded the adopted amendments as a disguised attempt by the governing party to enhance its authority, including over the judiciary.

21. Following the referendum, the AKP announced that it planned to launch the process of drafting the new constitution after the 2011 parliamentary elections. The stated intention is to review the 1980 Constitution currently in force and to eliminate inconsistencies that have resulted from frequent amendments in recent years. The authorities have stated that they envisage a broad and inclusive process of public consultations on drafts and plan to seek input from across the political spectrum. In this connection, many interlocutors insisted that the central issue of these elections was whether or not the winning party would gain an absolute majority allowing it to adopt the new constitution without substantive consultations with other political players.

22. The current constitution prohibits the application of amendments to the legal framework one year before elections, which is in full compliance with Council of Europe recommendations.

23. Voting is compulsory in Turkey. Failure to exercise this civil duty entails a fine of 20 Turkish lira (approximately € 9). This provision is, however, rarely enforced.

3. Election administration, voter and candidate registration

24. In Turkey, elections are administered under the general supervision of the judiciary.

25. The elections of 12 June 2011 were administered by a four-tiered structure, comprising the Supreme Board of Elections (SBE), Provincial Election Boards (PEBs), District Election Boards (DEBs) and Ballot Box Committees (BBCs). The election administration was primarily composed of senior judges, but allowed for the representation of political parties. The SBE enjoyed broad public confidence and was generally assessed as performing its duties in a professional and efficient manner. However, its decision not to introduce voting at diplomatic and consular representations abroad drew considerable criticism. The SBE assessed that Turkish representations abroad were not prepared to organise voting uniformly, not least given the shortage of time for the preparations. It maintained provisions for the establishment of polling stations for voters registered as residing abroad at border crossing customs points. Twenty-five such polling stations were established allowing for early voting starting from 10 May by voters included in foreign country resident voter lists and travelling to or from Turkey in the period preceding the elections. In order to prevent multiple voting, voters were marked as such in the online voter register to which all border crossing polling stations were connected, and their passports were stamped.

26. The decision concerning diaspora voting was widely criticised, not least by the Prime Minister, as compromising the universality of the suffrage.

27. As far as candidates' registration is concerned, on 18 April 2011, the SBE rejected 12 independent candidatures, based on the fact that the 12 candidates had been convicted in the past in connection with terrorist activities. This decision restricted the chances of the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) to be represented in the parliament as all independent candidates were either members or supporters of the BDP. Following strong reactions from the general public and politicians, notably Prime Minister Erdoğan, the SBE reconsidered its decision and, on 21 April, it announced that 7 of the 12 candidates would be allowed to run in the elections. Subsequently, one of these seven withdrew his candidacy. It was widely believed that the SBE, in rejecting registrations, acted in accordance with the letter of the Law, which, in its turn, implied that legislative improvements were needed.

28. Voters' lists for the elections were prepared by the SBE, based on extracts from a nationwide electronic civil registration system that linked voters' registered residence with a unique personal identification number. A number of issues were raised with regard to the voter registration system, including concerns related to the short period of public scrutiny.

29. On election day, voters exercised their right to vote upon presentation of their personal identification number. This number is included not only in official identification documents, but also in bank statements, commercial contracts and utility bills, all of which can be accepted as proof of voter identity on election day provided they include, or are accompanied by, a document that contains the voter's name and a photograph. Despite the fact that personal identification numbers have been in use since 2000, the Ministry of the Interior estimated in the spring of 2011 that approximately 1% of the population still did not have the number and might, therefore, be unable to vote. To alleviate this problem, the Ministry of the Interior carried out a public information campaign on television encouraging citizens to follow simple procedures to obtain the personal identification number ahead of the elections.

30. For the 2011 elections, the SBE introduced a number of novelties. For the first time, transparent ballot boxes were used. Voters' fingers were no longer inked. The SBE also made efforts to ensure the accessibility of polling stations to voters with disabilities. People with disabilities could inform electoral administrators beforehand and their names would thus be included on the lists of polling stations located on the ground floor of a building hosting numerous BBCs. Those who had failed to do so could still vote in polling stations on the ground floor and their enveloped ballot papers, after the vote, were to be delivered by electoral administrators to the polling stations concerned. However, it transpired during our observation that there was little clarity among electoral administrators and public at large with regard to these new provisions.

31. The ad hoc committee noted with satisfaction the possibility given to prisoners to vote in detention centres, as one of the Assembly observers saw in Van in south-eastern Turkey.

32. There was a high degree of confidence in the integrity of the electoral process, including election day procedures at the level of polling stations. However, certain concerns were shared by some opposition political party and civil society representatives regarding the transfer of results from BBCs to DEBs on election night in rural areas, and their entry into the electronic tabulation system at DEBs. The SBE stated that these concerns should be alleviated by recent amendments entitling political party representatives to receive copies of BBC results (limited to representatives of three parties chosen by lot by the respective BBC). The independent candidates were at a disadvantage in that they could not obtain state funding for their election-related activities.

4. The campaign period and media environment

33. As a broad range of political parties and independent candidates ran for the 12 June 2011 elections, the campaign was dynamic and drew significant public interest. The elections were hard-fought and divisive, not least due to the growing polarisation of the Turkish society. The ad hoc committee welcomes the possibility which was given to candidates in these elections to conduct campaigns in languages other than Turkish, which constitutes a positive move.

34. The unilateral ceasefire declared by the PKK in August 2010 was generally respected, despite threats articulated in March 2011 that it could be ended due to what was described by Kurdish militants as the authorities' failure to conduct a dialogue with the Kurds. This inevitably contributed to mounting tensions.

35. Reports of violence, harassment, imprisonment and detention of Kurdish opposition supporters, including elected officials, and a loss of life in the east and south-east of the country further compounded the situation.

36. The pre-electoral period was marred by outbreaks of violence with at least 50 people reportedly killed; a powerful (36 kg of explosives) remote-controlled bomb was defused on the eve of the Prime Minister's visit to the south-eastern areas of the country bordering on Iraq, there were attacks on offices of independent candidates supporting the Labour, Democracy and Freedom Block in Istanbul, Toroslar, Mersin and other locations. An Istanbul candidate, Mr Őnder, was personally attacked. It was reported that the police took no action.

37. The media environment is diverse in Turkey. Political parties contesting the elections were entitled to use free airtime on the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) to present their electoral platforms. For the first time, parties and candidates were able to purchase broadcast time for political advertisements. Political parties were granted free airtime in the final week of the campaign on the state-owned public television channel. Additional airtime was granted to parties proportionally, based on votes received in the last elections. Opposition parties claimed they had significantly less exposure to the media than the ruling party. Independent candidates do not qualify for free airtime and thus find themselves in the least favourable situation. Compliance with media-related regulations was monitored by the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTSC). The RTSC's reports were reviewed by the SBE, which had the authority to impose sanctions for violations. However, concerns were expressed over a perceived deterioration of the media environment, pressure on media outlets and journalists, and self-censorship. Negative campaigning in connection with an alleged sex scandal was reported. On 2 May 2011, the Turkish Constitutional Court amended the press law to extend the statute of limitations for filing criminal cases against journalists from two months to eight years. This ruling has been cited by many observers as putting journalists under the permanent threat of a criminal lawsuit.

5. Complaints and appeals

38. Decisions of the SBE are not subject to appeal. In this connection, the SBE's own decision to reinstate some independent candidates it had earlier rejected was welcome, but it did raise some legal questions.

39. The ad hoc committee heard the following complaints from its interlocutors.

40. The main issue raised by the opposition was the 10% threshold for political party representation in parliament. This threshold is the highest in Europe and is clearly limiting the representative nature of the legislature in Turkey. It also affects the diversity of political discourse in the country.

41. Questions were raised by opposition parties with regard to a remarkable increase in the number of registered voters (10 million) in recent years and also with regard to the printing of a disproportionally high number of ballot papers.

42. As the Turkish law does not allow domestic observers (other than party representatives) to observe the elections, those NGOs who had applied for accreditations had seen their applications rejected.

43. There are still more than 50 journalists imprisoned in Turkey, some of them being investigated due to their alleged connections with an attempted coup. Media representatives informed the ad hoc committee about the permanent need for self-censorship. Business interests also play an extremely important role in the general orientations of media.

44. Issues related to religion and ethnicity had been used (according to the opposition parties) as a subtle tool for electoral propaganda.

45. The BDP representative insisted on the discrimination induced by the 10% threshold in financing the electoral campaign of the political parties from public funds (only the parties which passed the threshold are entitled to the financial support from the state). Although they had a political group within the parliament they were excluded from support.

6. Election day – vote, vote count and tabulation of results

46. On election day, voting generally took place in a calm and relaxed atmosphere. In contrast, in the South-East heavy police presence was reported. Police reportedly used tear gas to disperse a cheering crowd in Van after the closure of the vote. The ad hoc committee regretted that local non-partisan NGOs were not allowed to observe the vote.

47. Transparent ballot boxes were used for the first time. In order to preclude any pressure on the voters, no cameras or mobile phones were allowed in the booths.

48. Observers were generally granted access to the overwhelming majority of polling stations visited. In isolated cases they, or their interpreters, were not granted access. These facts were duly reported to the SBE. Some electoral officials were uneasy about having international observers do their job, in particular insisting that any such observation calls for reciprocity.

49. Opening and voting procedures were duly followed in most polling stations visited by Parliamentary Assembly observers. The vote count was done efficiently, not least because the average number of votes per BBC did not exceed 300.

50. The results of the elections are reproduced in Appendix 5.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

51. Turkey's democratic, well-managed elections demonstrated pluralism, but also showed a need for improvements in fundamental freedoms.

52. It was brought to the attention of the rapporteur a week after the elections that a Kurdish candidate from Diyarbakir, Hatip Dicle, currently in detention, who successfully made it into parliament, was subsequently denied a seat in it by the SBE, a decision upheld by the Appeals Court, because of what was qualified as "propaganda in favour of a terrorist organisation".

53. It should further be noted, that other elected members of CHP and BDP, who received permission to run in the elections, were also subsequently denied seats. This led the CHP and BDP members to refuse to swear the oath on 28 June 2011 and thus boycott the parliament. CHP members subsequently took up their seats.

54. The case of Mr Dicle and of other candidates raises questions regarding validation and denial of registration by the SBE and the reversal its decisions after complaints. The ad hoc committee, while stressing the need to abide by the separation of powers, encourages the authorities to clarify the electoral provisions in order to avert similar situations in the future.

55. The ad hoc committee welcomes the overall professionalism and dedication of electoral administrators.

56. The ad hoc committee reiterates the Assembly's recommendation to lower the existing 10% threshold, to avoid in the future the distortions it creates in the representative nature of the elected legislature.

57. The ad hoc committee encourages the authorities to ensure the exercise of the right to vote by Turkish citizens residing abroad through polling arrangements in the diplomatic and consular representations.

58. All political stakeholders should abstain from confrontationist practices. Disproportionate use of force and the practice of detentions, including detentions of elected officials, should be avoided. The ad hoc committee underlines the need for zero tolerance of terrorist activities.

59. The media should be granted freedom of expression. The relatively constraining legal framework should be revised. Clear and unambiguous rules regarding media freedom and freedom of expression need to be introduced.

60. The new Turkish Parliament may wish to consider passing new legislation that would allow local non-partisan observers to be involved in the process. This would help further enhance transparency and public confidence in the electoral process.

61. The issue of the still insufficient participation and representation of women in politics should also be addressed in order to ensure equal opportunities. The improvement during this election, demonstrated by the number of seats held by women increasing from 46 to 78, should be seen as a first step.

62. Voting conditions for the disabled should be further improved, possibly through the introduction of mobile ballot box voting for the disabled.

63. The ad hoc committee calls on the new Turkish Parliament to pass, without delay, laws to further improve the electoral system. This should be done in consultation with all political players and the involvement of the Venice Commission, if need be.

64. The Parliamentary Assembly stands ready to assist Turkey in its efforts to bring about broader democracy.

Appendix 1 – Pre-electoral mission (17-18 May 2011)

Programme

Tuesday, 17 May 2011

09.00	Opening of the meeting of the ad hoc committee
09.45	Briefing by Ambassador Marc Pierini, Head of the European Union Delegation in Turkey
11.00	Meeting with Mr Ali Em, Chairperson of the Supreme Board of Elections
12.00	Meeting with political parties: – The Peace and Democracy Party (BDP)
13.00	Meeting with the Delegation of Turkey to Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
	Meeting with political parties (continued)
14.30	The Justice and Development Party (AK Party)
15.40	The Republican People's Party (CHP)
17.00	Round table with NGO representatives: – Ms Feray Salman, Human Rights Joint Platform – Mr Öztürk Türkdoğan, President, Human Rights Association – Mr Ayşegül Bahçivan, Equal Rights Watch – Mr Musa Akkum, Helsinki Citizens Assembly – Turkey – Ms Emma Sinclair-Webb, Human Rights Watch – Mr Özcan Çine, Union of Bar Associations

Wednesday, 18 May 2011

10.00	Ad hoc committee meeting
11.00	Round table with media representatives: – Hürriyet Newspaper – Today's Zaman – CNN-Türk – TRT
13.00	Press conference

Appendix 2 – Parliamentary elections in Turkey: statement by the PACE pre-electoral delegation

Strasbourg, 18.05.2011 – A four-member, cross-party delegation[1] of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) making a pre-electoral visit to Turkey ahead of the 12 June parliamentary elections has welcomed the sound economic progress achieved in Turkey since the 2007 parliamentary elections.

"There is a vibrant civil society in the country and, in a welcome development – since electronic media can now broadcast in languages other than Turkish only – campaigning is now allowed in those languages as well. The Supreme Board of Elections (SBE) is acting in an efficient and transparent manner and, seemingly, in full compliance with the letter of the law. Some legislative amendments introduced since 2007, albeit not yet all-encompassing, have paved the way for a better and more transparent electoral process.

At the same time the media, while generally believed to be free, are reportedly applying self-censorship for fear of falling victim to a broad interpretation of the anti-terrorist legislation. The candidate registration process, even though carried out in accordance with the letter of the existing legislation, has resulted in a situation where a number of candidates were initially denied registration, a decision promptly reversed by the SBE with regard to some of those candidates after a public uproar. This is a clear indication that the relevant legal basis is in need of further improvements. In addition, the application of the relevant legislation must be carried out in good faith.

Reports of growing tension, violence, harassment, imprisonment and detention of Kurdish opposition supporters, including elected officials, and a loss of life in the east and south-east of the country give rise to grave concerns. We call upon all political stakeholders to refrain from acts of violence.

Overall, it is widely believed that while the elections will be free, their fairness is open to improvement, not least given the unequal conditions for the contenders.

In this regard, the ten per cent threshold, by far the highest among the Council of Europe member states, remains the central issue that limits the representative nature of the legislature.

We expect Turkey to take corrective action and stand ready to extend assistance as needed. We hope that the forthcoming 12 June elections will be held democratically, in an orderly, peaceful and non-violent environment."

The delegation was in Ankara from 17 to 18 May 2011 at the invitation of the Turkish delegation to PACE. It held meetings with the Chairman of the SBE, representatives of political parties running in this election and the EU Ambassador to Turkey, as well as a representative cross-section of civil society and the media. PACE observers will return to the country with a 30-member delegation to observe the 12 June elections.

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[1] Kerstin Lundgren (Sweden, ALDE), Head of the Delegation, Latchezar Toshev (Bulgaria, EPP/CD), Arcadio Díaz Tejera (Spain, SOC), and Andrej Hunko (Germany, UEL).

Appendix 3 – Programme

Friday, 10 June 2011

09.00 – 09.30	Opening of the meeting of the ad hoc committee
09.30 – 10.15	Statements by Ms Kerstin Lundgren, Head of the Delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Ms Pia Christmas-Moeller, Head of the Delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE PA) and Mr Alaattin Büyükkaya, Chairperson of the Turkish Delegation to the OSCE PA
10.15 – 11.00	Briefing by Mr Michele Villani, Chargé d'affaires of the European Union Delegation in Turkey and Ms Cayetana de Zulueta, Head of the OSCE/ODIHR Limited Mission in Turkey
11.00 – 12.00	Meeting with Mr Mehmet Kürtül, Member of the Supreme Board of Elections
12.00 – 12.45	Meeting with Mr Haluk Ipek, Deputy Chairman, Justice and Development Party (AKP)
14.00 – 14.45	Meeting with Ms Gülsün Bilgehan (Deputy Chairperson) and Mr Izzet Çetin, Deputy Chairman of the Republican People's Party (CHP)
14.45 – 15.30	Meeting with Mr Tuğrul Türkeş, Member of the Turkish Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Nationalist Movement Party (MHP)
15.30 – 16.15	Meeting with Mr Deniz Zarakolu, Peace and Democracy Party (BDP)
16.30 – 17.30	Round table with media representatives: – Hürriyet Online, Ms Zeynep Gürcanli – TARAF, Mr Mithat Sahkar – TRT, Mr Ali Ahmet Böken – Supreme Board of Turkish Radio and TV, Mr Nurullah Öztürk
17.30 – 18.30	Round table with:NGO representatives: – Mr Dilek Ertukel, Country Director, National Democratic Institute (NDI) – Ms Feray Salman, Human Rights Joint Platform (IHOP) – Mr. Hüsnü Öndül, Legal Advisor of IHOP – Ms Levent Korkut, Civil Society Development Center (Chair of the Board) and Steering Board member of IHOP – Mr Öztürk Türkdoğan, President, Human Rights Association – Ms Seda Alp, Equal Rights Watch – Mr Nejat Taştan, Equal Rights Watch – Mr S. Erdem Türközü, Human Rights Foundation – Mr Musa Akkum, Helsinki Citizens Assembly – Ms İlknur Üstün, Women Coalition – Mr Ahmet Faruk Ünsal, Mazlumder – Mr Özcan Çine, Union of Bar Associations
18.45	Meeting with drivers and interpreters for teams in and around Ankara

Saturday, 11 June 2011

Deployment to the regions

Sunday, 12 June 2011

Observation of the parliamentary elections

Monday, 13 June 2011

09.00	Meeting of the ad hoc committee
11.00	Press conference

Appendix 4 – Turkey's well-managed, democratic elections demonstrated pluralism, but also showed a need for improvements on fundamental freedoms

Strasbourg, 13.06.2011 – The 12 June 2011 elections to the Turkish Grand National Assembly demonstrated that recent changes enacted by the Turkish government have improved the electoral system, yet there were some worrying developments, especially regarding freedom of expression, including media freedom. The electoral process was generally characterized by pluralism and a vibrant civil society. Voting and counting observed on Election Day showed a mostly calm and professionally-managed process.

Some elements of the legal framework continue to constrain activities of the media and political parties by limiting freedom of speech.

The 10 percent threshold for political party representation in Parliament – the highest in the OSCE region – remains one of the central issues that limit the representative nature of the legislature.

For the first time, contestants were allowed to buy political advertisements. Political parties are granted free airtime in the final week of the campaign on the main state-owned public television channel; additional airtime is granted to parties proportionally based on votes received in the last elections. Independent candidates do not qualify for free airtime and opposition parties claimed that they receive significantly less coverage in Turkish media compared to the governing party.

The registration of political parties and independent candidates offered voters genuine choices. The practical allowance for the use of other languages, including Kurdish, in political campaigning is an important change this year that strengthened the country's pluralistic, democratic debate.

Government control over influential media groups allegedly resulted in biased reporting and self-censorship, but journalists and NGOs said business interests also limit media freedom. Observers noted the detention and ongoing investigations of more than 50 journalists in Turkey, some linked to alleged connections with an attempted coup. Limiting freedom of the media is a violation of the 1990 Copenhagen Document and a host Council of Europe documents. On 2 May 2011 the Turkish Constitutional Court amended the Press Law to extend the statute of limitations for filing criminal cases against journalists from two months to eight years. This ruling has been cited by many observers, including the OSCE Rep-preventative on Freedom of the Media, as putting journalists under the permanent threat of criminal law-suits.

Procedures during the elections were generally well organized and conducted in an orderly and professional fashion, even though there were initial problems with the registration of some independent candy-dates. The Supreme Board of Elections (SBE) enjoyed broad public confidence and respect through its transparent, professional and efficient administration of the election. Voters had to present photo identification at polling stations. Transparent ballot boxes were used for the first time. In a technical improvement, the SBE had prepared voter lists for the elections based on a nationwide electronic civil registration system that links a voter's registered residence with a unique personal identification number. However, many stakeholders raised questions about remarkable changes in the number of registered voters in recent years, and the printing of a disproportionally high number of excess ballot papers.

Political parties had sufficient ability to convey their programs to voters. The election campaign took place in a polarized environment. The parliamentary observers welcomed the fact that the stakeholders mostly exercised restraint even if there was heavy police presence and tensions in parts of the South East, as well as isolated reports of physical attacks. At the same time, many rallies with large crowds of citizens occurred largely free of violence. Most importantly, the election day was overall carried out without violence.

The counting observed was done efficiently and in compliance with the existing regulations. Party representatives and observers had access to the results in the polling stations.

There is a need to broadly promote more participation and representation of women in the political life of the country. Less than 9 per cent of the seats in the outgoing parliament were held by women, and the candidate lists presented by the political parties did not meet promises made; women never made up even 20 per cent of the candidates on any party's candidate list.

On Election Day, observers witnessed the opening of polling stations, voting and the closing process, including the vote count. Local election officials and poll workers appeared well-trained, polling pro-ceded in a calm and well-organized manner. Turnout was reported at 84 per cent.

In keeping with its OSCE and Council of Europe commitments, Turkey invited parliamentarians from the OSCE and Council of Europe to observe these elections. The observers were mostly granted access to all levels of election administration and polling stations on Election Day. In order to remove any uncertainty and to comply fully with OSCE commitments, it is desirable that the law specifically allow international observers access to national election proceedings.

The observation, bringing together more than 70 observers, including 61 Members of Parliaments from 30 countries, was a joint effort of delegations from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE PA), led by OSCE PA Vice-President, and Member of the Danish Parliament Pia Christmas-Moeller, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), led by Member of the Swedish Parliament Kerstin Lundgren.

Appendix 5 – Election results in Turkey, 12 June 2011

Political Parties	Number of votes	Percentage %	Number of deputies
Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)	21.320.207	49.80	327
Democrat Party (Demokrat Parti)	278.775	0.65	
Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi)	11.122.420	25.98	135
Labor Party (Emek partisi)	31.766	0.07	
Nation Party (Millet Partisi)	60.673	0.14	
Liberal Democratic Party (Liberal Demokrat Party)	15.166	0.04	
Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi)	541.470	1.26	
Rights and Equality Party (Hak ve Eşitlik Partisi)	124.082	0.29	
The People's Voice Party (Halkın Sesi Partisi)	329.358	0.77	
Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi)	5.575.010	13.02	53
True Path Party (Doğru Yol Partisi)	64.453	0.15	
Turkish Communist Party (Türkiye Komunist Partisi)	63.786	0.15	
Nationalist and Conservative Party (Milliyetçi ve Muhafazakar Partisi)	36.105	0.08	
Great Union Party (Büyük Birlik Partisi)	322.819	0.75	
Democratic Left Party (Demokratik Sol Parti	107.889	0.25	
Independent (Bağımsız)	2.819.917	6.59	35
TOTAL	42.813.896	100	550

Number of registered voters: 50.237.343

Number of votes cast: 43.785.665

Valid votes: 42.813.896

Invalid votes: 971.769

Turnout: 83.6%

Decision of the Supreme Board of Elections of 22 June 2011, decision number 1070

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