



ENEMO International Election Observation Mission Kosovo Local Elections 2013

Preliminary Statement on repeated 1st round of Elections at three polling centers in North Mitrovica

The re-run of the 1st round of local elections in North Mitrovica was conducted efficiently, with occasional procedural shortcomings. Institutions in charge of security have managed to provide safe and calm pre-conditions for voters to express their electoral will freely and peacefully.

Following an invitation from the President of the Republic of Kosovo, Mrs. Atifete Jahjaga the European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations (ENEMO) deployed an Election Observation Mission (EOM) to observe the Kosovo Local Elections held on 3 November 2013.

On 1 October 2013, ENEMO's Core Team arrived in Pristina and prepared the deployment of 12 long-term observers in 6 teams, covering the whole territory of Kosovo. They were monitoring the pre-election environment including the political campaign and activities of the election administration prior to the 3 November elections. On the Election Day on 3rd of November, ENEMO deployed 34 election observers from its member organizations to observe 221 polling stations, throughout all municipalities in Kosovo.

ENEMO has also monitored the Repeated Elections in North Mitrovica on 17th of November with 3 mobile teams of 2 LTOs, who were acting as STOs during the E-day. These 6 LTOs were deployed to North of Mitrovica from their areas of responsibility, in order to observe the election process in all 3 Polling Centers. ENEMO Headquarters deployed another team as a support and emergency team.

The election process is assessed on the basis of international standards for democratic elections and the national legislation. This statement of preliminary findings and conclusions is delivered after the Election Day of the repeated Elections in the first round, in only a part of Polling stations in North Mitrovica. These findings and conclusions are preliminary and do not render a final assessment of the entire election process. The mission will continue to observe the process of tabulation of results and the complaints and appeals process as well as the second round of elections.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

The re-run of the 1st round of local elections in North Mitrovica was conducted efficiently and administered in a peaceful atmosphere in all Polling Centers, with occasional procedural shortcomings.

Institutions in charge of security have put significant efforts in providing an adequate number of security forces in the North Mitrovica and, at the same time have managed to provide safe and calm pre-conditions for voters to express their electoral will freely and peacefully.

ENEMO's observers have again noticed abuse of state resources/power by a number of public officials addressed to citizens, mainly to those employed in public institutions.

Active political campaigning in the vicinity of Polling stations, as well as political campaign material of political entities was very visible in many PSs.

Based on information gathered from the field, Polling stations were closed on time and materials from all Polling Centers were taken by the OSCE and later transported to the Counting and Result Centre in Pristina for counting.

Based on the reports from the observers, family voting yet remained a challenge in many Polling Stations.

In terms of gender equality, ENEMO praises the electoral administration for providing of adequate representation of the opposite gender, in majority of Polling stations in North Mitrovica.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

On Election Day, 8 observers were deployed in 4 teams of 2, to follow the opening, voting and counting procedures at all 3 Polling Centers. Additional 3 teams of ENEMO were deployed to observe the counting of ballots at the CRC. In total, ENEMO observers covered all 27 polling stations.

Political campaign materials were noticed less than 100m from the PS in 48% of all Polling stations, whereas active campaigning was noticed in the vicinity of 37% of visited PSs.

Facilitated by the OSCE, the electoral administration generally managed to prepare polling stations in accordance with the law and most of polling stations visited by ENEMO observers had been opened on time, or with minor delays. The opening process was assessed positively in all observed PSs, by ENEMO observers.

The atmosphere during the Election Day was calm and peaceful in majority of PSs. Security forces were visible in front of every PC and there were no major incidents reported.

Minor shortcomings regarding the performance and organization of PSCs were noticed during the day in a number of PSs. Some PSC members did not have adequate knowledge about the procedure and proper accreditations from the CEC. Additionally, several procedural irregularities have also been noted. For example, in 34% of visited polling stations, PSC members did not always check properly for ink, what may have left space for multiple voting.

During these repeated elections, legal provisions regarding the eligible voter identification documents have been mainly respected by all PSCs. Therefore, voters with foreign (mainly Serbian) documents were allowed to vote, if they were in the Voters List.

ENEMO observers did not see any homebound voters highlighted in the Voters Lists, what may have left space for double voting of the same persons, once regularly and once through the Special needs and Circumstances voting mechanisms. CRC should pay special attention to verify and double check these lists for possible double names during counting of ballots from the SNC voting.

The secrecy of the vote was generally respected in all polling stations visited, except for limited cases of group or family voting, which were observed in 6 PSs. At the same time, ENEMO has observed a number of voters coming in organized groups, mainly consisted by citizens employed at public institutions in North Mitrovica. Many voters belonging to these groups were not a part of the Voters list in PSs that they visited, so they voted conditionally.

In more than 50% of observed PSs, voters that were not found in Voters Lists were not directed to the Help Desk to seek further assistance, majority of these voters have went directly to the Dual PS to vote conditionally instead. This has caused long lines and crowd within Dual PSs and may prolong the counting of conditional ballots in the CRC.

All observer teams of ENEMO were mobile teams, unlike the domestic observers, which are mainly stationary and are following the process in particular polling stations throughout the entire day. ENEMO noted a presence of domestic observers in only 19 % of polling stations visited.

The voting procedure was marked by ENEMO observers mainly as very good (5) and good (20).

After the closing of all PSs, election materials, together with ballot boxes were brought to CRC in Pristina, accompanied by the OSCE for counting, apparently due to security reasons. Even though that counting process has not been done in PSs, due to higher transparency within the CRC than usual, ENEMO observers had the chance to see most of the performance of counting votes by PSCs.

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