



EVALUATION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN AZERBAIJAN, NOVEMBER 1, 2015

During the 5th parliamentary elections held on November 1, 2015, Azerbaijan determined the deputies for the National Assembly. According to the preliminary results of the Central Election Committee of Azerbaijan, the voter turnout was 55.7% (2.89 million) and the New Azerbaijan Party won the elections with 74% of total votes. The Central Election Committee of Azerbaijan will officially announce the election results after their approval by the Constitutional Court.

The National Assembly of Azerbaijan is a unicameral legislative body, which consists of 125 deputies. According to the Article 83 of The Constitution, the deputies are elected in accordance with the majority voting system and general, equal and direct elections by way of free, individual and secret voting for a 5-year term. All Azerbaijan citizens not younger than 25 could take part in the elections in an established order (Article 85). The National Assembly will have powers after authority of 83 of its deputies are approved (Article 87). According to the results of the 4th parliamentary elections for the National Assembly held on November 7, 2010, the New Azerbaijan Party won 71 seats, representatives of other parties won 12 seats and independent candidates won 42 seats. As the single-party government had the vast majority in the National Assembly, the government did not face a serious opposition during the rule making process.

This year the parliamentary elections were held in an environment of high socio-economic tensions and regional instabilities. As widely known, due to the global economic crisis the oil and natural gas prices had decreased. This decrease had a negative effect on the economic development of the country, high amount of the revenue sources of which significantly depends on oil and natural gas sales, and also caused decrease of the gold-exchange reserves of Azerbaijan to \$2.4 billion. At the same time, Azerbaijan authorities had to devalue the national currency, manat, which depreciated by 33.9% in February 2015. In order to deal with the socio-

economic problems the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, took measures both to strengthen the fight against corruption and to improve the deteriorated economic conditions. For instance, some of the ministries were changed and the decision on privatization of the public bank, namely, Azerbaijan International Bank, was signed.

Moreover, both strengthening propaganda and ideology of the ISIS among the youth in the Azerbaijan society and intensification of the conflict between the Azerbaijani and Armenian military forces in Nagorno-Karabagh in September 2015 negatively affected the regional stability. In these circumstances, Azerbaijan authorities started to implement stricter control on the financial transactions of all officially registered religious institutions and non-governmental organizations in the country, and started to solve the problems on the Azerbaijani-Armenian border in a decisive attitude. Besides, on June 4, 2015, the Foreign Ministry of Azerbaijan sent a diplomatic note to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) expressing its plans to close down its Project Coordinator Office in Baku. Although no basic reason for the closing was mentioned in the note, the Western Press claimed that the decision for shutting down the Office was closely related to the heightened criticism of Azerbaijan's record on civil society and on freedom of the media in general, and the Presidential Election held in October 2013 in particular.

In total 767 candidates entered the 2015 Parliamentary Elections representing 15 parties and one bloc of parties, Freedom-2015, formed by 7 opposition parties. On October 28, 2015 the Musavat Party announced that they withdrew their 25 registered candidates and they would not take part in the elections. Similarly, the opposition party, the Azerbaijan Popular Front Party, and the National Council of Democratic Forces, which was established jointly by approximately 100 independent politicians, intellectual groups and various direc-

tors of non-government organizations (who were not pleased with the political regime) boycotted the elections.

According to the Azerbaijan's Central Election Committee, as a result of the voting in all 5547 polling stations the distribution of deputies in the National Assembly is as follows: the New Azerbaijan Party – 70, the Whole Azerbaijan Popular Front Party – 1, the Azerbaijan Political Party of Democratic Reforms – 1, the Great Order Party – 1, the National Revival Movement Party – 1, the Azerbaijan Social Democratic Party – 1, the Civil Solidarity Party – 2, the Motherland Party – 1, the Azerbaijan Social Prosperity Party – 1, the Unity Party – 1, the Civil Union Party – 1, the Azerbaijan Democratic Enlightenment Party – 1. The independent candidates took remaining 43 seats in the National Assembly.

Over 503 representatives from 40 international organizations and more than 63 thousand local observers watched the Azerbaijan Parliamentary Elections as electoral observers. For instance, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe sent 30 observers. However, the OSCE's Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Office did not attend this process. In general, both the observers from the international organizations and the local observers declared that the parliamentary elections were held in a free, fair, transparent and democratic environment.

In conclusion, it should be noted that although the Parliamentary Elections in Azerbaijan were held in conditions of both high security tension over the region and the worsening of the socio-economic problems, the opposition parties could not get enough support of the population. It could be indicated that Azerbaijani citizens prefer to vote for the ruling party in order to strengthen the regional stability, economic development, social welfare and security. Therefore, the Azerbaijani society has once again given a vote of confidence to the New Azerbaijan Party, which is ruled by the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev.

Politics, Foreign Affairs and Security

- The voter turnout at the runoff voting at the local elections in Ukraine was 34%. The runoff mayoral elections were held in 29 Ukrainian cities. The voting was held in the majority of Ukraine's regional centers and in several cities with a population of more than 90,000.
- During the G20 Summit held in Antalya, the heads of states discussed the possibility to improve coordination of global economic policies, focusing on the humanitarian aspect of the Syrian refugee problem and struggle against terrorism.
- The multi-party ministerial talks on Syria were held in the Austrian capital of Vienna. The multinational talks hosted 19 delegations from Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, China, Germany, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran and other states of the Persian Gulf alongside with the EU foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, the UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, and a representative of the Arab League.
- The Russian military delegation led by Deputy Chief of Staff of Russian Armed Forces, Nikolay Bogdanovsky, and the North Korean Defense Minister, Pak Yong Sik, have discussed the ways to develop cooperation between the armies of the two countries at a meeting in Pyongyang. As a result of the meeting, Russia and North Korea signed an agreement, according to which, each of the sides would be taking necessary measures aimed to prevent hardware and personnel from getting into the territory of another state due to force majeure circumstances or because of unintended activity.

Economy, Finance and Energy

- According to the OPEC's November oil market report, Kazakhstan's oil production is projected to decrease by 20,000 barrels per day to average 1.6 million barrels per day in 2015. It was announced that Kazakhstan's September oil production fell by 25,000 barrels per day, compared to August, to 1.49 million barrels per day, which is a three-year low and is lower year-on-year for the third consecutive month.
- According to the Regional Director of BP, Gordon Birrell, the volume of oil production at the Azeri-Chirag-Guneshli (ACG) is ahead

of the projected figures in the current year. BP and its partners produced 16 million tons (116 million barrels) of oil at the ACG block in H1 of 2015, which is equal to that of H1 2014. In 2014 British BP and its partners extracted 31.5 million tons of oil (233 million barrels), compared to 32.2 million tons of oil (239 million barrels) extracted in 2013.

- According to the Finance Minister of Russia, Anton Siluanov, Russia's Reserve Fund may reach nearly 1 trillion rubles (roughly \$15 billion) by the end of 2016 and the capital outflow from Russia may reach \$60-65 billion in 2015.
- According to the National Statistics Service of Ukraine, as of October 2015 inflation increased by 33.3% since the beginning of the year. In January-October, 2015, the country's inflation hiked by 41.3% as compared to the same period of 2014.
- According to the World Bank report, in January-August 2015 the GDP of Kyrgyzstan grew at a rate of 6.8%, the gold output grew by 46%, while the non-gold GDP growth rate reached 4.5% up 0.9% points from the same period in 2014. The growth is projected to accelerate to 4.2% in 2016, driven by higher gold production and by expected acceleration in regional economic activity.
- According to the Statistics Committee of the National Economy Ministry of Kazakhstan, trade turnover of the country with the countries of the Eurasian Economic Union neared \$12.121 billion in January-September, 2015, or 25.8% less than in the same period of the last year.
- Azerbaijan has improved its position by 16 points, from the 71st place last year to 55th place among 130 countries this year, in the annual ranking of energy sustainability calculated annually by the World Energy Council. Other energy rich Eurasian countries such as Russia and Kazakhstan were placed 49th and 77th respectively.
- According to the Committee on Statistics of the Ministry of National Economy of Kazakhstan, the inflation rate as measured by consumer price index reached 5.2% in October 2015, compared to September 2015. The consumer prices in Kazakhstan in January-October 2015 increased to 8.2% compared to 6.3% at the same period of 2014. The year-

on-year inflation reached 9.4% in October 2015.

- The Central Bank of Azerbaijan announced its expectations of 4.4% inflation in the country in 2015.
- The Legislative Chamber of Uzbekistan's Oliy Majlis has approved the state budget for 2016. The parameters of the state budget were worked out taking into account the planned GDP growth of 7.8%, an industrial production growth of 8.2%, an agricultural production growth of 6.1%, and a capital investments growth of 9.6% for 2016. The budget deficit was expected to reach 1% of GDP, the revenues of the state budget and expenditures were expected to reach 18.4% and 19.4% of GDP respectively.
- According to the National Bank of Kazakhstan, the country has considerably reduced export of its goods to \$36.4 billion in January-September 2015. For the same period last year the amount of Kazakh export amounted to \$62.7 billion.

Society and Culture

- The Federal Air Transport Agency of Russia put a ban on passenger flights to Egypt. The Russian top airline Aeroflot will be flying solely in one direction - from Egypt to Russia until December 1, 2015.
- The countries of Eurasian region including Russia, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and others offered their condolences to France after the series of terrorist attacks in Paris, which killed at least 129 people and wounded another 352.
- The 44th humanitarian aid convoy from Russia delivered more than 1,100 tons of humanitarian aid to the eastern Ukrainian cities of Donetsk and Luhansk.
- The Azerbaijani state-owned company Azercosmos signed a loan agreement with the Japanese Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation and Mizuho Bank in the amount of €100 million for 11 years. The loan will be used to finance AzerSky satellite system and to establish a ground infrastructure.
- The Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, Karim Masimov, stated that an international center for the development of "green" technologies and investment projects under the auspices of the United Nations would be opened in Astana.