

Report on the Out-of-Country Voting Programme
for the National Assembly Elections in Republika Srpska, BiH
22-23 November 1997

Brief Overview

The National Assembly Elections in the Republika Srpska (RS)/BiH took place on 22 and 23 November 1997. They were the outcome of a political crisis between the President of the country and the Government, leading the former to call for elections to renew the National Assembly representatives with a view to form a new government.

The national political leadership and the international community considered the new elections as the best way to ensure a return to political stability, the strengthening of democratic rule and the reinforcement of the peace process.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) once again offered its leadership to supervise and organize the electoral mechanism and ensure that the elections take place in an orderly and fair way and in the shortest possible timeframe.

In view of its expertise and participation in all previous elections under the Dayton Agreement, the OSCE contracted once again the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to organize and manage the out-of-country voting programme for all Bosnian citizens residing abroad.

The Institutional Set Up

The responsibilities and mandates of the parties involved in the out-of-country election process were clearly defined and remained the same as for the Municipal Elections of September 1997. In particular and in brief:

The OSCE Secretariat provided: the operational budget for funding the out-of-country elections programme, administrative and logistics support to the Out-of-Country Voting (OCV) programme as well as the deployment of International Supervisors for the polling process in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and the Republic of Croatia.

The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina provided: the Election Rules and Regulations, the policy guidelines and directives, technical support and operational guidelines for the programme implementation as well as voter information material and International Trainers to train staff involved in election process.

The Out-of-Country Voting (OCV) Steering Board maintained an oversight over the out-of-country election process and offered guidance and assistance to IOM in the management of the election programme.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM), the project implementing organization, managed and organized the entire operational set up for the out-of-country voting.



Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe



IOM International Organisation for Migration

Out of Country Voting (OCV)
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Report on the Out-of-Country Voting Programme
for the National Assembly Elections in Republika Srpska/BiH
22-23 November 1997

Vienna, 15th of December 1997



Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe



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ANNEX E

ELECTIONS FOR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN REPUBLIKA SRPSKA/BIH 22-23 NOVEMBER 1997

Information Leaflet

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has been requested to assume the responsibility to supervise and conduct the elections for the National Assembly in the Republika Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina, scheduled to take place on 22 and 23 November 1997. Citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina living abroad are also eligible to participate in these elections.

To this effect, the OSCE has reactivated the Out-of-Country Voting (OCV) programme and contracted again the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to organize and manage the election programme for the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina living outside Bosnia and Herzegovina, to participate in the elections for the National Assembly in Republika Srpska.

Who is Eligible to Vote

There will be NO new registrations for the National Assembly elections in Republika Srpska (RS). National Assembly elections in RS will be conducted on the basis of the registrations of citizens of BiH made for their participation in the BiH municipal elections in September 1997.

Eligible to vote in the elections for the National Assembly in the Republika Srpska are ONLY the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina WHO, in the municipal elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina of September 1997, were registered to vote in a municipality located in the territory of Republika Srpska.

OCV Offices - Election Process

IOM has reactivated its Operational Offices in Belgrade (FRY) in Zagreb (Croatia) and in Vienna (Austria) to implement the Out-of-Country Voting (OCV) programme. For the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina living in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and in the Republic of Croatia, elections will be conducted in person. Some 79 Polling Stations in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and 64 in Croatia, shall be established by the host Governments to facilitate voters in these countries to cast their ballot in person. For the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina living in other countries, elections will be conducted by mail through the Out-of-Country Voting Center located in Vienna.

Memoranda of Understanding were signed or updated between OSCE and IOM, and between the OCV and the governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Croatia respectively, under which IOM and the two countries assumed responsibility to organize and conduct the OCV election programme.

The Timeframe

The elections were scheduled to take place in the shortest possible timeframe both for political reasons and in view of the upcoming winter conditions which isolate areas within the Republika Srpska resulting in voters being prevented from casting their ballots. The election dates were set out to be on 22 and 23 November 1997.

The Structural Set Up

The structural set up and operational mechanism for out-of-country voting was similar to that of the September 1997 Municipal Elections. IOM reactivated the Out-of-Country Voting offices in Vienna, FRY and Croatia beginning in mid-October 1997. The OCV Office in Bonn was not reactivated because of the short time available, and because the operational set up called for a direct-mail programme for election information materials and balloting, exercises conducted from the OCV Office in Vienna where the computerized voter database was stored.

The Elections Process

The Elections were conducted on the basis of the Rules and Regulations, as well as the policy guidelines, established by the Provisional Election Commission (PEC) in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

For political reasons and in view of the short time available, the Provisional Election Commission in Bosnia and Herzegovina decided that there would be no new registrations for the National Assembly Elections in the Republika Srpska. As such, the final voters register of Bosnian citizens compiled for the 1997 Municipal Elections in BiH was used. Eligible voters were those who were then registered to vote in a municipality located in the territory of the RS.

IOM organised the voter information-education and the election programme within the parameters and the timeframe set out in the PEC Rules and Regulations and applied the operational directives and guidelines issued by the Election Department of the OSCE Mission in BiH.

Voting occurred by mail for eligible Bosnian voters residing abroad, with the exception of those residing in FRY and Croatia. Voters were notified about the elections through an information registration receipt which was directly mailed to all eligible voters between 24-31 October. Ballots with instruction letters were mailed out between 05-10 November. In FRY and Croatia voting occurred in person on 22 and 23 November as happened in-country voting in Republika Srpska. Eligible voters had to choose among 49 Parties, Coalitions and Independent Candidates.

Security

In cooperation with the long-term supervisors and the local counterparts, the OCV offices developed comprehensive security and evacuation plans for the international supervisors and other election staff in case of emergency.

Monitoring

The polling process in Vienna was monitored by two high ranking officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Justice of the Republika Srpska, who attended every step of the process, from receipt of ballots, to sorting, scanning, checking in the database, counting, packaging and shipping. They also escorted the ballots to the OSCE Mission in Sarajevo on board special flights arranged by the OSCE. From their arrival, the monitors scrutinised the polling process from a different perspective as they questioned the legality of the polling by mail and the validity of the identification submitted by voters, although it was made clear to them that these policy decisions had already been made by the appropriate body. The monitors on completion of their mission expressed appreciation for the professional and transparent way in which the election procedures were applied.

Members of the OCV Steering Board monitored the polling in FRY and Croatia. They reported conditions to be normal, although the issue of the tendered ballots had created some tension in some polling stations especially in FRY, but were easily overcome. Observers from the Helsinki Human Rights group in both countries attended the polling process as well as, in the case of FRY, representatives of the SNS (President Plavsic's Party) and SDS (Serb Democratic Party). ODHIR sent observer-teams to Croatia but none to FRY. With the exception of a few incidents of pressure on individual cases to cast a ballot in FRY, no major irregularities or attempted fraud was reported.

Finance

The election programme (project number A-6) remained well within the approved budget of US\$ 927,000 allocated by the OSCE. In addition IOM administered also payments under project number A-5 related to expenses for the international supervision of the elections, made on behalf of the Election Supervision Department of the OSCE Mission to BiH.

Comments/Suggestions

Early in the polling process, the issue of the validity of the out-of-country ballots received by mail was raised. The cut-off date for the receipt of ballots at the OCV Office in Vienna was questioned by the RS political leadership, as were the type of supporting identification submitted by voters. Halfway through the election process, the PEC decided that any document which could attest the identity of a voter in the database would be accepted and the ballot therefore valid. The issue of the cut-off date for mail-in of ballots, which was of major concern, was considered by PEC at a special meeting which occurred after the polling days and a decision was taken *not* to accept as valid ballots postmarked after 24 November, despite voters having been informed that their ballots need only to be received by the OCV Vienna by 05 December. Following an appeal process, the issue was resolved by the

Election Appeals Sub-Commission (EASC) which on 6 December decided to uphold the PEC's decision and to *not* accept the ballots postmarked 25 November or later as valid.

This decision was considered by the OCV Steering Board unfortunate as it deprived 20,879 (23%) voters of their right to vote, through no fault of their own. In fact IOM had suggested a more specific wording (with election dates given therein) of the information-registration receipt and of the instruction leaflet. These suggestions, however, were not considered due to printing deadlines occurring before actual polling dates were officially announced. IOM publicised the election dates through an information leaflet which it subsequently circulated widely in the countries hosting eligible voters. In future, a clear cut-off date for postmarking should be made known to the voters at the earliest possible stage of the election process.

- There has been a major shortcoming in the distribution by mail of registration receipts and ballots, particularly in Germany. The OCV Office in Vienna received many complaints from individual voters and various refugee associations reporting that voters had received either the ballot only or the registration receipt only. Eligible voters had therefore to produce other identification than the required original bar-coded registration receipt. This is evident by the fact that some 30% (27,801) of the ballots were returned with other identification than the original registration receipt. An additional 10% (10,723) of the ballots were received at the OCV with no identification. This high number may be attributed to rumours circulated in Germany and reported by the BiH Mission to OSCE that ballots would be accepted without any identification.

This issue, which is of great concern to IOM and the OCV Steering Board is being investigated with the fast mail delivery company TNT, which has been requested to produce dated evidence of delivery of registration receipts and ballots to some of the destination countries and in particular Germany. The Mail distribution agency (TNT) in an interim reply advised that the registration receipt was delivered to the German Post on 10 November 1997:

- Another unfortunate event was the postal strike in Canada, which occurred during the polling period and deprived a large number of voters of the possibility to participate in the elections. Out of 965 eligible voters in that country, only 98 ballots were received at the OCV Office in Vienna by closure of business 5 December. Over 500 ballots from Canada arrived at the OCV in the week that followed the closure date for receipt of ballots.
- In general the time available between the mail out of the ballots and the election dates proved to be short, especially for voters residing in overseas countries and in countries with less effective mail service. Over 2,500 ballots were received at the OCV the week after the closure date.
- There has been a noticeably low turnout in FRY and Croatia which may be attributed to the lack of interest of a population that has slowly integrated in their host countries and is not considering return. This is also suggested by reports from groups dealing with refugee resettlement. In fact, a substantial number of the BiH refugee population in Croatia has been granted Croatian citizenship. As for the turnout in all other countries, it may be considered good although the failure in the mail delivery system in Germany and few other countries may have had a certain impact.
- On several occasions during these elections, basic guidelines and directives were issued or rules were interpreted quite late in the process. This created uncertainty and raised unnecessary doubts that might have affected the smooth running of the process, had the IOM

ANNEX
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

OSCE forms provided for this purpose. Valid ballots will be separately packed, sealed at the polling station and in sealable bags, in which there will also be the counting forms and damaged and unused ballots, transported to the OSCE Mission in Sarajevo. The transport of the sealable bags will be carried out by OCV-Zagreb. All forms must be filled in and signed by the Election Committee Chairperson and the International Supervisor.

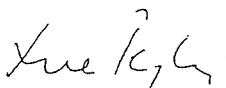
8. The OCV commits, on behalf of the OSCE, to contribute towards the cost of the aforementioned election process an amount of US \$ 80,000. This figure is based on a budget program submitted by the Croatian Office for Displaced Persons and Refugees. Upon signature of the MOU, the OCV shall advance to the Office the amount of US \$50,000. Further partial payments may be disbursed thereafter as agreed upon by the contracted parties. In the event of unforeseen expenses due to changes in the electoral process, additional funding, up to a maximum of eight (8) per cent of the original amount agreed upon in the Annex, may be approved by the OCV upon submission of a revised budget estimate. Final settlement of the pledged amount shall be made within two weeks of the completion of the electoral process and upon submission of pertinent documentation by the Office to the OCV.
9. The articles from the Memorandum of Understanding referring to the election/polling process and the information campaign, signed in Zagreb on 15 May 1997 between the OSCE and the Government of the Republic of Croatia and represented by the OCV and the Office, will be applied to the out of country election/polling process in Croatia for the RS National Assembly elections.

The Memorandum of Understanding is signed in two original copies, both in Croatian and English, each text being equally authentic.

14 November 1997



Dr. Jorgen Elkdit
Chair
OCV



Mr. Lovre Pejković
Head of Office
ODPR

The following is an Annex to the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Croatia, represented by the Office for Displaced Persons and Refugees, and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), represented by the Out of Country Voting Steering Board.

Subject: The Annex outlines the provisions of the participation of citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), hosted in the Republic of Croatia, in the National Assembly elections of the Republic Srpska (RS) scheduled for 22 and 23 November 1997.

The Office for Displaced Persons and Refugees (hereafter Office) of the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Out of Country Voting (hereafter OCV) Steering Board commit to the following:

1. In co-operation with the OCV Program Office in Zagreb, the Office shall organise and implement the polling process for BiH citizens, hosted in the Republic of Croatia, who are eligible to vote in the RS National Assembly elections. The Government of the Republic of Croatia will implement the rules and regulations established by the Provisional Election Commission (PEC) of the OSCE.
2. There will be no new registrations for the aforementioned elections. RS National Assembly elections will be conducted on the basis of the registration carried out in the Republic of Croatia for the September 1997 BiH Municipal Elections. BiH citizens, who registered to vote in a municipality of the RS for the BiH municipal elections, are eligible to vote in the RS National Assembly elections.
3. The information campaign shall begin one week before the elections.
4. Polling shall take place on 22 and 23 November. Ballots shall be cast in person when voters report to their assigned polling station. Polling shall take place at the same number of sites as during the BiH municipal elections. Each polling station shall be supplied by OSCE with a voters register. All persons whose name appears on the voters list are eligible to vote. There will be no mail-in voting conducted by the OCV in Croatia.
5. The Office, in co-operation with the OCV, shall organise polling stations throughout Croatia at sites used during the BiH municipal elections.
6. OSCE will provide a sufficient number of ballots which will be forwarded to the OCV-Zagreb, together with other electoral material. OCV-Zagreb will forward the materials to local election committees under international supervision. The Office will provide safe and secure storage for non-sensitive electoral material, while OCV-Zagreb will provide the same for sensitive electoral material.
7. Upon closure of the polling station, the local Polling Station Committees shall count ballots under international supervision. Valid ballots will be counted by party, coalition and independent candidate. Upon counting the ballots, the counting form will be filled on the

ANNEX B

Memorandum of Understanding

Between the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia represented by the Election Commission for Bosnia and Herzegovina Refugees hosted in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (hereafter the Commission) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), represented by the Out of Country Voting (OCV) Steering Board (hereafter OCV).

Subject: National Assembly Elections in the Republika Srpska (RS) of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) for citizens of BiH hosted in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, scheduled for 22 - 23 November 1997.

The Commission and the OCV commit to the following:

1. The Commission, in cooperation with the OCV Office in Belgrade, shall organize and implement the polling program for the participation of citizens of BiH living in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia for the National Assembly Elections in BiH / RS, in accordance with the Rules and Regulations established by the Provisional Election Commission (PEC) of the OSCE and in accordance with the national law.
2. There will be no new registrations. National Assembly Elections will be conducted on the basis of the registrations made for the BiH municipal elections held in September 1997. BiH citizens, who registered to vote in a municipality in the Republika Srpska in the municipal elections in BiH, are eligible to vote in the National Assembly Elections in RS.
3. The OCV shall supervise the entire polling through its Operation Office in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, in accordance with the PEC Rules and Regulations. The OCV Officers, as well as other accredited observers, shall have free access to the voter polling stations during the polling day(s).
4. The Commissions shall pursue the policy that every citizen of BiH / RS in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia who registered to vote in a municipality in RS in the BiH municipal elections is given the opportunity to cast his/her vote in the National Assembly Elections in RS. The Commission and the OSCE shall hold any information or data related to the polling process and voters in professional secrecy.

Polling Program

5. Polling shall take place on 22 - 23 November 1997. Voting shall be in - person and voters shall have to report to a polling station to vote. Each polling station shall be supplied by OSCE with a voter's register of the voters eligible to vote. Only the persons whose names appear on a voter's register are eligible and shall be allowed to vote.

6. The Commission, in cooperation with the OCV, shall set up and organize 79 Polling stations throughout the country at sites, which were used during BiH Municipal Elections. The Commission shall appoint a Local Election Committee at each polling station and required administrative personnel to assist polling.

7. The OCV / OSCE shall provide international and local trainers to educate the members of the Local Election Committees and the administrative personnel involved on the voting rules and procedures.

8. The Commission shall take care to provide the polling stations well, with all required equipment and infrastructure, communication and other facilities to ensure a smooth, secret and transparent polling process.

9. OCV / OSCE shall prepare the ballots and deliver them to the Local Election Committees at each polling station under the supervision of the International Supervisors.

10. The OSCE shall deploy International Supervisors at each polling station as well as Core Supervisors to supervise and assist in the polling process. The International Supervisor, in cooperation with the Chairperson of the Local Election Committee shall ensure secrecy and transparency in the polling process and assist the polling staff to discharge their functions successfully.

11. The Local Election Committees, on closure of the polling, shall count all regular ballots and complete a counting form by party, coalition and independent candidate under the supervision of the International Supervisor. They will also complete accounting forms for tendered ballots, which will be counted for a total number only. The ballots, regular and tendered, shall be sealed in the polling station in tamper evident bags and shipped to the OSCE Mission in Sarajevo.

Information Campaign

12. Voters eligible to participate in the National Assembly Elections in BiH / RS shall be advised through press advertisements and other public media. The OSCE shall prepare the proper information and voter education material, which shall be made available to the Commission for proper use in the voter information and education campaign.

13. The Commission and the OCV shall coordinate the information campaign. The Commission shall provide a liaison officer to coordinate the information campaign and shall utilize all information channels to invite eligible voters to participate in the elections. Local refugee aid groups, community councils, NGOS, IOs and other refugee aid groups shall also be invited to participate in the voter information process.

Other Services

14. The Commission in cooperation with the OCV in Belgrade shall facilitate the issuance of entry visas to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to appropriate OCV, OSCE and IOM staff visiting the country for duty purposes.

15. Accreditation of monitors, journalists and / or other interested groups / individuals requesting access to the polling stations shall be coordinated by the Commission in consultation with the OCV.

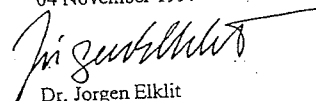
16. The Commission shall provide secure storage and transportation for election materials to and from OCV and the polling stations. This operation shall occur under international supervision. The Commission shall also provide security at the storage places and at the polling stations.

17. The OCV commits, on behalf of the OSCE, to contribute towards the cost of the aforementioned election process for the BiH / RS citizens in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, with an amount up to 70,000 USD (seventy thousand US dollars) based on a budget program submitted by the Commission. Upon signature of the MOU, the OCV shall advance to the Commission the amount of 30,000 USD (thirty thousand US dollars), and further partial payments may be effected in the progress of the program as may be upon by the contracted parties. Final settlement of the pledged amount shall be made within two weeks from the completion of the election program and upon submission of relevant documentation by the Commission to OCV.

18. The Commission shall follow any policy changes established by the PEC, subsequent to the signing of the present Memorandum of Understanding.

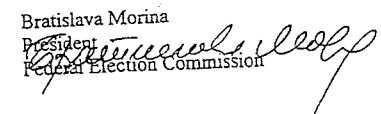
This Memorandum of Understanding is made in two original copies, in Serbian and in English, both texts being equally authentic.

04 November 1997



Dr. Jorgen Elklit
Chairman
OCV Steering Board

Bratislava Morina
President
Federal Election Commission



MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM)
AND THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-
OPERATION IN EUROPE (OSCE)

1. PRINCIPLE

IOM and OSCE shall co-operate in organizing out-of-country voting for assembly-level elections in Republika Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina to be held in 1997. IOM and OSCE shall agree on the method of voter registration and balloting.

2. RELATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

(a) IOM shall assume :

- (i) responsibility for managing the voter registration programme and organizing the electoral process for citizens of Republika Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina living in asylum States (this responsibility known hereinafter as 'the project'). IOM shall have the right to enter into agreements with other international organizations in order to fulfill the project.
- (ii) financial responsibility for the project, including all operational and administrative matters. An Interim Budget containing the estimated cost for fulfilling the project is attached to this Memorandum of Understanding (hereinafter 'MOU').
- (iii) responsibility for participating in, and operational arrangements for, the Out-of-Country Steering Board (hereinafter called 'OCV SB' or 'Steering Board') which shall advise IOM in implementing the project. The Steering Board shall consist of similar organizational entities to those that participated in the just concluded OCV (Municipal Elections) Steering Board.
- (iv) responsibility for providing a written report to the Steering Board on a regular basis, concerning the progress in implementing the project.
- (v) responsibility for consulting with aim to reach agreement the OSCE Head of Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina when confronting problems or prior to taking decisions which bear on policy relating to the project of which affect substantially the work of the OCV structure.

(b) OSCE shall :

- (i) make the financial contributions set forth in paragraph 4 (1) below.

- (ii) provide support in technical areas relevant to this project.

3. JOINT RESPONSIBILITIES

- (a) IOM and OSCE shall jointly develop arrangements with Host States to provide in kind of financial resources to offset and/or supplement the attached budget. Host States shall be encouraged to provide domestic infrastructure as required free of charge.
- (b) IOM and OSCE shall agree as expeditiously as possible on a Revised Budget which shall supersede the Interim Budget that is attached to this MOU. The Revised Budget shall take into account changes in project parameters.

4. FINANCIAL ASPECTS

- (a) As set forth in paragraph 2.1.2 above, financial responsibility for the project rests with IOM. OSCE shall submit the following financial contributions for the project provided that the total amount of the financial contributions to be provided by OSCE will not exceed the total amount of the approved budget, it being understood and agreed that the budget will include overhead costs only as a proportion of salaries and administrative expenses :
 - (i) USD 500,000 to be transferred to an IOM-designated account within ten days following the signature of this MOU by both parties.
 - (ii) USD 250,000 to be transferred into an IOM-designated account within ten days following the submission to the OSCE Head of Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina records showing commitments exceeding USD 400,000. The records will provide full financial documentation to include copies of all relevant documents necessary to identify and support the expenditure and financial obligations incurred on behalf of OSCE.
 - (iii) All other moneys due to be transferred into an IOM-designated account within thirty (30) days following the submission to the OSCE Head of Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina records showing final project commitments.
- (b) Standard IOM auditing policies shall apply.
- (c) No later than 30 days following completion of the project, IOM shall :
 - (i) present to the OSCE Head of Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina a Final Report, detailing all operational and financial records on the projects.
 - (ii) close the designated account. Not later than two months following the termination of project, all audited records shall be transmitted to the OSCE Head of Mission. At the same time all moneys not spent shall be transferred by IOM to an account designated by OSCE.



Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe



IOM International Organization for Migration

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Annex D

The Out-of-Country Voting (OCV) Steering Board

- Dr. J. Elkhit, Associate Professor, Chair of the OCV Steering Board
- Mr. B. Graff, Danish Delegation to the OSCE, Representative of the Chair in Office (CiO)
- Mr. W. Deutsch, Chief of Budget, OSCE Secretariat, Vienna
- Mr. A. Kohlschütter, Consultant
- Ms. B. Oppermann, Director of OCV, OSCE Sarajevo
- Mr. A. Halbach, Out-of-Country Voting (OCV) Coordinator, IOM
- Mr. A. Tsakiris, Deputy Coordinator, IOM



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ANNEX E

**ELECTIONS FOR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
IN REPUBLIKA SRPSKA/BIH 22-23 NOVEMBER 1997**

Information Leaflet

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has been requested to assume the responsibility to supervise and conduct the elections for the National Assembly in the Republika Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina, scheduled to take place on 22 and 23 November 1997. Citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina living abroad are also eligible to participate in these elections.

To this effect, the OSCE has reactivated the Out-of-Country Voting (OCV) programme and contracted again the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to organize and manage the election programme for the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina living outside Bosnia and Herzegovina, to participate in the elections for the National Assembly in Republika Srpska.

Who is Eligible to Vote

There will be NO new registrations for the National Assembly elections in Republika Srpska (RS). National Assembly elections in RS will be conducted on the basis of the registrations of citizens of BiH made for their participation in the BiH municipal elections in September 1997.

Eligible to vote in the elections for the National Assembly in the Republika Srpska are ONLY the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina WHO, in the municipal elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina of September 1997, were registered to vote in a municipality located in the territory of Republika Srpska.

OCV Offices - Election Process

IOM has reactivated its Operational Offices in Belgrade (FRY) in Zagreb (Croatia) and in Vienna (Austria) to implement the Out-of-Country Voting (OCV) programme. For the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina living in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and in the Republic of Croatia, elections will be conducted in person. Some 79 Polling Stations in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and 64 in Croatia, shall be established by the host Governments to facilitate voters in these countries to cast their ballot in person. For the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina living in other countries, elections will be conducted by mail through the Out-of-Country Voting Center located in Vienna.

Out of Country Voting (OCV)

Registration Letter/Receipt

The OCV office in Vienna has already advised the eligible voters of the impending elections for the National Assembly in Republika Srpska and of their eligibility to vote. The letter through which eligible voters were informed serves as a registration receipt. The letter was sent to eligible voters prior to announcement of the election dates and therefore it does not give the election dates, which have now been fixed for 22 and 23 November, 1997.

Ballot Kits

Eligible voters will be mailed a ballot kit within the first 10 days of November 1997. The ballot kit contains an instruction leaflet in four languages (English, Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian), the ballot, the ballot envelope and the ballot return envelope with the OCV return address printed. The voters should enclose in the return envelope the ballot envelope and the letter/registration receipt which they have received from OCV. The ballot will be invalidated if the letter/registration receipt is not returned together with the ballot.

There will be one ballot with 49 Parties, Coalitions and Independent Candidates. Voters may only choose one Party or Coalition or Independent Candidate by way of placing a cross (+) or (x) in the box in front of the Party, Coalition or Independent Candidate they choose to vote for. Voters should not write their personal data on the ballot.

Closure Date for Return of Ballots

Voters should return their ballot to the OCV office in Vienna immediately. The last day that OCV may receive ballots by mail and count them as valid is 05 December 1997. Any ballot received after 05 December 1997 will not count as valid.

Publicity

OCV will promote information for the election process through advertisements in the three BiH languages, in the press and other Public Media. Governments which host Bosnian Refugees, and Organizations which work with refugees are invited to and may contribute greatly in the information and voter education process.

Hot line service

OCV has reactivated as from 05 November 1997, its hotline service. Eligible voters may call for any information related to elections, the OCV Vienna hotline service every day from 08:00 to 20:00 hrs at telephone Nos:

+ 43 1 503 66 60; +43 1 503 66 61

General Statistics

(See detailed figures in Annex)

	ELIGIBLE VOTERS	BALLOTS CAST	TURNOUT
OCV FRY	19,014	10,024*	52,72%
OCV Croatia	38,199	10,871	28,50%
OCV Vienna	143,267	100,738**	70,31%
TOTAL	200,480	121,633	

* Of which 283 ballots not valid

** Of which 69,126 valid ballots postmarked 24 November and earlier; 20,879 not valid ballots as were postmarked 25 November and later; and 10,733 not valid ballots for lack of identification document.

Information

Information campaigns were carried out with material provided for by the OSCE; despite of the short time frame available for conducting the elections, they proved effective in most countries. Such campaigns were carried out in cooperation with government authorities as well as a network of voluntary agencies in the 50 countries hosting Bosnian refugees. Messages in the three languages were posted in the press and, particularly in FRY and Croatia, broadcast on radio and TV channels. In addition, a hotline, which proved to be extremely beneficial during the 1997 Municipal Elections, was set up at the OCV Office in Vienna, operating every day from 08:00 to 20:00 to answer any query on the elections process. Some 9,000 people availed themselves of this facility.

Training and International Supervision

Prior to their deployment at polling stations, international supervisors and local staff involved in the election process received comprehensive training by international trainers of the OSCE Mission to BiH, well versed on the subject. Interpreters assisting the international supervisors also received training which greatly facilitated communications and the supervisory activities.

To prepare the election support staff for supervisors, OSCE dispatched, as early as mid-October, six long-term supervisors in FRY and four in Croatia. The timing for deployment of the long term supervisors may have been a little too early, as support staff and election committees become operational only a week or so prior to the election dates. During the polling period, OSCE deployed 82 international supervisors in FRY and 67 in Croatia. In general, the supervisors had the required level of expertise but some had communication deficiencies in English.

At the OCV Office in Vienna

The OCV Office in Vienna served over 143,267 voters. Following the mail-out of the information-registration receipt, voters received their ballot at the beginning of November 1997. In view of the short time available between the mail-out of ballots and the election dates, voters were informed that ballots would be received at the OCV Office in Vienna until 5 December inclusive. This information raised uncertainty to the voters as to the cut-off date they could cast and mail their ballot. In fact, many ballots were postmarked after the election dates. A decision had to be taken by the OSCE Mission in Sarajevo as to whether or not ballots postmarked 25 November or later would be considered valid (the 24th being the first working day following the weekend elections counted as an admissible date). In the meantime, for practical purposes, ballot envelopes were separated in "Postmark 24 November and earlier" and "Postmark 25 November and later".

The opening of the mail, scanning and checking in the database, counting of ballot envelopes, packaging of sealed bags and shipment was handled by 50 local staff and supervised by three experienced international IOM staff, all of whom had performed similar duties in the September Municipal Elections.

The turnout of voters was relatively high: 70,31 %. Of the 143,267 ballots mailed out, 100,738 were returned including some 10% (10,733) without any supporting identification document and therefore not valid.

At the OCV Offices in FRY and Croatia

Elections occurred in person in FRY and Croatia on 22 and 23 November 1997 under international supervision. The local counterparts - the Federal Election Commission in FRY and the Organization of Displaced Persons and Refugees (ODPR) in Croatia - established the required polling stations: 79 in FRY and 64 in Croatia, including mobile teams, where voters cast their ballot. The polling stations were well equipped, had experienced staff and provided all facilities to ensure transparency and secrecy. Polling was conducted under normal and smooth conditions. Bad weather conditions prevented one polling team to reach its duty station in Stari Grad (Y236), Croatia, where the team arrived the day after the elections. In both countries, the turnout was quite low: 52,72% in FRY and 28,5% in Croatia. (See *General Statistics* below).

The original set of the Final Voters Registration lists for the RS National Assembly Elections made available to the polling stations in Croatia had not been sorted correctly and the lists had to be revised. Correct FVRs were shipped to polling stations on the day before polling began.

A tendered ballot procedure was also implemented for the RS National Assembly Elections. Local counterparts in both FRY and Croatia expressed concern about the limited criteria that allowed tendered ballots and wished to have them broadened. This could not be accepted within the rules, regulations and guidelines set out for the RS Elections. On the second polling day, however, the OSCE Mission to BiH broadened the criteria for tendered ballots but the information arrived too late at the OCV offices and the polling stations to allow eligible voters to benefit from the measure.

Security conditions at the polling stations were satisfactory during the polling period as well as for the transportation of election material from the OCV Offices to the polling stations and back.

Relations between the supervisors, the election committees and the elections support staff were generally good, with a few individual exceptions due to misinterpretations of the election rules and procedures. These misunderstandings, however, were easily overcome.

Memoranda of Understanding were signed or updated between OSCE and IOM, and between the OCV and the governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Croatia respectively, under which IOM and the two countries assumed responsibility to organize and conduct the OCV election programme.

The Timeframe

The elections were scheduled to take place in the shortest possible timeframe both for political reasons and in view of the upcoming winter conditions which isolate areas within the Republika Srpska resulting in voters being prevented from casting their ballots. The election dates were set out to be on 22 and 23 November 1997.

The Structural Set Up

The structural set up and operational mechanism for out-of-country voting was similar to that of the September 1997 Municipal Elections. IOM reactivated the Out-of-Country Voting offices in Vienna, FRY and Croatia beginning in mid-October 1997. The OCV Office in Bonn was not reactivated because of the short time available, and because the operational set up called for a direct-mail programme for election information materials and balloting, exercises conducted from the OCV Office in Vienna where the computerized voter database was stored.

The Elections Process

The Elections were conducted on the basis of the Rules and Regulations, as well as the policy guidelines, established by the Provisional Election Commission (PEC) in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

For political reasons and in view of the short time available, the Provisional Election Commission in Bosnia and Herzegovina decided that there would be no new registrations for the National Assembly Elections in the Republika Srpska. As such, the final voters register of Bosnian citizens compiled for the 1997 Municipal Elections in BiH was used. Eligible voters were those who were then registered to vote in a municipality located in the territory of the RS.

IOM organised the voter information-education and the election programme within the parameters and the timeframe set out in the PEC Rules and Regulations and applied the operational directives and guidelines issued by the Election Department of the OSCE Mission to BiH.

Voting occurred by mail for eligible Bosnian voters residing abroad, with the exception of those residing in FRY and Croatia. Voters were notified about the elections through an information-registration receipt which was directly mailed to all eligible voters between 24-31 October. Ballots with instruction letters were mailed out between 05-10 November. In FRY and Croatia, voting occurred in-person on 22 and 23 November as happened in-country voting in Republika Srpska. Eligible voters had to choose among 49 Parties, Coalitions and Independent Candidates.

OCV VIENNA - FINAL STATISTICS
 NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IN RS, NOVEMBER 22-23 1997

Annex E

COUNTRY	ELIGIBLE VOTERS TOTAL	VOTED * TOTAL	PERCENT. TURNOUT %
ALBANIA			
ALGERIA	12	0	0,00
AUSTRALIA	2	1	50,00
AUSTRIA	1729	1233	71,31
BELGIUM	18471	14257	77,19
BULGARIA	711	555	78,05
CANADA		0	0,00
COLOMBIA	965	98	10,15
CROATIA		0	0,00
CZECH REPUBLIC	38.199	10.871	28,50
DENMARK	250	155	55,36
EGYPT	5340	5062	86,68
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY	3	0	0,00
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA	67.154	40861	60,85
FINLAND	19.014	10.024	52,72
FORMER YUGOSLAVIA REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA	602	556	92,36
FRANCE	195	69	35,38
GREAT BRITAIN	1576	1327	84,20
HUNGARY	1095	935	85,39
IRAN	506	273	53,95
IRELAND	1	0	0,00
ISRAEL	249	197	79,12
ITALY	20	14	70,00
JORDAN	737	463	62,82
KENIA	3	1	33,33
KUWAIT	2	0	0,00
LIBYA	12	3	25,00
LIECHTENSTEIN	99	32	32,33
LUXEMBOURG	54	24	44,45
MALAYSIA	114	89	78,07
MOROCCO	28	7	25,00
NETHERLANDS	17	8	72,73
NEW ZEALAND	3527	3066	86,93
NORWAY	95	0	0,00
PAKISTAN	2330	2022	86,78
POLAND	11	6	54,55
PORTUGAL	5	3	60,00
ROMANIA	2	0	0,00
RUSSIA	5	5	100,00
SAUDI ARABIA	33	2	6,06
SIERRA LEONE	1	0	0,00
SLOVAKIA	1	0	0,00
SLOVENIA	62	16	25,81
SPAIN	4422	2749	62,17
SWEDEN	115	82	71,30
SWITZERLAND	19512	16945	86,84
SYRIA	9027	7072	78,34
TURKEY	2	2	100,00
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	428	315	73,60
USA	14	9	64,29
Ballots from Countries without postal identification	3202	1905	59,49
TOTAL	200480	121633	60,66

* INCLUDING BALLOTS ONLY. NOT FOUND IN DB