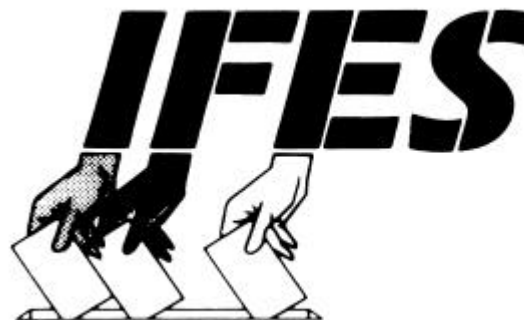


# Europe and Asia Report



March 1999

## New Russian Central Election Commission Holds Inaugural Meeting

On 19 March 19 the President appointed the last five members to the new Central Election Commission (CEC) of the Russian Federation. As stipulated in the Voting Rights Act, the CEC consists of 15 members appointed for a four-year term. The Duma, the Federation Council, and the President each appoint five members, who then elect the officers. On 24 March, the newly appointed CEC gathered for the first time to meet and to elect their Chairman, Vice Chairman, and the Secretary. Former CEC Secretary Alexander Veshniakov was elected Chairman; Valentin Vlasov, former Presidential Representative to Chechnya, was elected Deputy Chairman; and Olga Zastrozhnaya, a former CEC Commissioner (previously appointed by the Duma and re-appointed by the

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Alexander Veshniakov (left) recently sworn in as Chairman of the CEC is congratulated by Juliana Pilon, IFES Director for Europe and Asia (second from left), and Christian Nadeau, IFES Project Director. Also present is CEC staff member Olga Balashova (far right).

President) was elected Secretary. Overall, five members of the former CEC were re-appointed for an additional term. See the table below for a complete listing of new and returning members.

### **Russia Amends Voting Rights Act**

On 5 March the State Duma passed the amendments to the law "On Basic Guarantees of Electoral Rights and the Right to Referendum of Citizens of the Russian Federation," otherwise known as the Voting Rights Act. Contrary to expectations and the previous attempts at amending the law, the 17 March amendments were approved by the Federation Council and forwarded to President Yeltsin, who signed them into law on 30 March. A comparative grid is now under development at IFES that will compare amendments to the old law with a translation of the complete text of the new law.

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## EUROPE

### ASSOCIATION OF CENTRAL AND EAST EUROPEAN ELECTION OFFICIALS (ACEEEO)

#### *Association Moves Closer to Sustainability in Riga*

Last Autumn, the Association of Central and Eastern European Election Officials and its 12-member countries committed to stepping up efforts to provide regionally-based solutions to enhance the development of sound democratic institutions in Central and Eastern Europe. Limited by increasingly fewer financial resources, the Association's Executive Board met from March 25 - 26 in Riga, Latvia to identify new means of financial sustainability, determine innovative means of institutional development, and set defined program objectives. IFES was also present as a Member-Supporter of the Association and an advisor at the event that was hosted by the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Latvia.

Members of the board elected Livia Skultetyova, Head of the Elections Department of the Ministry of Interior of Slovakia, to replace Zenonas Vaigauskas of the Lithuanian CEC as the President of the Board. Under Dr. Vaigauskas leadership, a new Charter was established and the Association increased its role in the region. In the coming year, Ms. Skultetyova will host the annual conference of the Association in Bratislava and continue to advance the goals of the ACEEEO.

The new Charter of the Association sets forth a solid framework within which institutional development can take place. Now the ACEEEO is taking the next steps. At the meeting, the Secretary General of the Association Dr. Zoltan Toth reported on his efforts to obtain membership fees and other financing, while introducing a plan that relies on the membership to step up their support for funding initiatives through direct fundraising and in-kind support. Although some specifics of the plan were questioned, representatives of the Executive Board from Lithuania, Russia, Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine, as well as the Latvian CEC Chair, all strongly endorsed the need for increased member involvement.

#### *New Association Programs Emphasize Regional Initiatives*

At the meeting in Riga, board members discussed ways to increase their impact on and support for the development of democratic processes in the region. The Conference in Bratislava promises to play a key role in this effort. Through training and sharing of experience Association members and guests will address ways to increase education, information, and participation in the electoral process. An impressive presentation on Latvia's future voter and civic education plans at the meeting in Riga and the subsequent discussion demonstrated that these issues are important. In an environment of declining participation in the process, effective

voter education and mobilization campaigns are crucial to the continued electoral development in the region. Participants in the conference will employ nearly a decade of experience to identify successes and failures, while examining how to use innovative technologies and approaches. Moreover, the Association plans to issue a resolution to encourage all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to establish independent, permanent election commissions as a way to support free, fair and transparent election administration.

The Budapest-based ACEEEO Secretariat is also developing a series of other complementary initiatives ranging from election observation to training to information resource development. In addition to coordinating election observation missions with the OSCE/ODIHR, the Association announced plans to send representatives of member electoral authorities to observe elections to the European Parliament. Observers not only plan to obtain greater insight into the electoral practices of their European counterparts, but also to gain familiarity with the rules and procedures under which new countries to the European Union will need to conduct elections. This exciting initiative is being supported by European counterparts in Austria, Germany, and the United Kingdom.

Representatives from each of these countries will first train the participating association members in Győr, Hungary, at a facility currently being used to train Hungarian election officials. The ACEEEO hopes to use this effort to launch future training projects at the center through the Association's EURO VOTES program. In order to support this and future initiatives, the Secretariat is also bolstering the holdings of its Documentation Center and other information development initiatives. For example, election experts are currently developing a set of model election law guidelines designed to support new election-related legislation and amendments. The Association hopes to finalize this document at the upcoming conference in Bratislava.

#### *IFES Increases Collaboration with the Association*

Demonstrating its commitment to these institutional and programmatic development initiatives, IFES is determined to work closer with the ACEEEO. In order to follow-up on the Association's participation in the Conference of the Global Electoral Organization (GEO) Network in Ottawa, Canada, IFES is placing an On-Site Program Coordinator in Budapest. The GEO Conference is a joint IFES-IDEA-UN program designed to bring electoral associations from around the world together with other democracy organizations and funders. IFES' primary objective is to build the capacity of the Secretariat to identify funding and implement sound organizational practices while increasing the level of joint IFES/ACEEEO projects in the region. By maximizing the comparative advantage of each organization, IFES hopes to conduct more effective and less costly projects throughout the region. IFES and the ACEEEO are already planning to join

forces to develop a Second Edition to the highly informative Central and Eastern European Election Law Compendium. The compendium first published in 1995, will be updated and be made more accessible to lawmakers, election officials, and academics through the use more advanced and cost-effective information technology.

## **ALBANIA**

### ***Kosovar Refugees in Albania Expected to Total 200,000; EU, U.S. Pledge Assistance***

During the last week of March, Prime Minister Pandeli Majko told local officials to expect as many as 200,000 Kosovar Albanian refugees fleeing from Kosovo. ("RFE/RL Newswire," 30 March 1999) Already several tens of thousands of refugees have entered Albania, and by the end of March thousands had reached Tirana. Individuals and businesses have been offering shelter, food and clothing to the displaced Kosovars. The U.S. and its European counterparts have committed millions in aid to both Albania and Macedonia to provide basic provisions to refugees.

### ***Civil/Voter Registry Project***

Penny Martin, IFES Civil/Voter Registration Specialist, completed the pilot civil/voter registry project in March. Initiated in October 1997 as a joint effort between IFES, the OSCE, and the Albanian government, six municipalities were selected to test the computerization of a national civil registry. The project included the creation of a registry database and local registrar training. In the upcoming months, the OSCE Liaison Office for Local Government will administer the program to assist local registry officials in the takeover of the project. It is hoped that the six pilot project locations will show both the need and the feasibility of a nationwide civil/voter registry project.

### ***IFES Continues Post-Referendum Assistance***

The next phase of the IFES post-referendum assistance project will include technical assistance in the administration of elections, legal reform, and civic education activities. One of the primary goals of the project will be the development of the constitutionally mandated Central Election Commission. Assistance will focus on establishing a permanent and independent commission that is responsible for not only administering elections during an election period, but managing election issues in between these periods for a smoother and more efficient, election process.

## **BELARUS**

### ***Survey to Provide Baseline of Public Opinion on Elections***

At this time IFES is preparing to undertake a 100+ question nationwide survey of the Belarusian electorate to measure public opinion on perception of issues and expectations involved with the 4 April 1999 elections of local assemblies of deputies. This will represent IFES' first full survey of the

Belarusian electorate. The survey is expected to provide an effective baseline for future IFES surveys and will assist in measuring the impact of current international and domestic programs underway in Belarus and address unidentified needs. The questions will be grouped into the following categories: qualifying perceptions on politics and government; confidence in officials and institutions; official corruption; political preference and voting patterns; rating of effectiveness, efficiency, and honesty of election administration; appraisal of importance of rights; availability of information on the Constitution, laws, rights; perceived level of information; opinion on media coverage; and demographics. Fieldwork should begin by the end of April. Topline data is expected by late May. This project is supported under a Cooperative Agreement with USAID.

## **BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

### ***Westendorp Dismisses RS President***

High Representative for Bosnia Carlos Westendorp dismissed Republika Srpska (RS) President Nikola Poplasen from office on 5 March. Westendorp accused Poplasen of obstructing the implementation of the Dayton Accords and of refusing to recognize the results of last year's parliamentary elections by refusing to nominate Milorad Dodik as premier. The decision was received with much indignation by the Bosnian Serb Parliament, which refused to accept the dismissal. Poplasen himself has also refused to accept the decision, and has refused to step down, in spite of Westendorp's warning that he will be removed by force if he does not comply. Nonetheless, on 22 March, Vice-President Mirko Sarovic announced that he was ready to take over the Presidency. Sarovic's Serb Democratic Party (SDS) is a close partner of Poplasen's ultra-nationalist Radical Party.

### ***Bosnian Officials Resign over Brcko Ruling***

An international panel ruled on 5 March that the strategic town of Brcko, which is currently run by Serbs under international supervision, would become a neutral district within BiH. The decision triggered outrage among Bosnian Serbs, because many fear that fear that the decision would split the RS in two. The Bosnian Serb Parliament held an emergency session on 7 March, during which it was decided that the ruling would not be accepted, and that all Bosnian Serb representatives would withdraw from the country's federal institutions in protest. Bosnian Serb Premier Milorad Dodik and Serbian chairman of the Bosnian Presidency Zivko Radisic both initially offered their resignation, but withdrew it a few days later.

### ***Croat Official Killed by Car Bomb***

Federation Deputy Interior Minister Jozo Leutar was seriously injured on 16 March, when a bomb wrecked his car in Sarajevo. Two weeks later, Leutar died as a result of his injuries. Croat officials have blamed the Muslim leadership for the bombing, and have therefore boycotted all levels of

government. The HDZ, which is the main Croat Party, has called for the resignation of federation Prime Minister Edhem Bicakcic and his interior minister, both of them Muslims.

### ***Decisions Trigger Tensions against International Community***

Many of this month's events have triggered mistrust and anger among Serbs toward the international community. Westendorp's dismissal of President Poplasen, coupled with the international panel's decision on the status of Brcko, inspired many angry Serbs to question the role played by the international community in their country. The situation was further aggravated by the commencement of NATO air strikes against Serbs in neighboring Yugoslavia. There have been incidents of violence against international organizations in the RS, and therefore many international NGOs have ceased their activities. IFES' Civic Education Project, due to its high credibility and reputation for being non-partisan, has not been the target of any violence, and continues to be well received and welcomed. It appears that IFES is the only organization continuing to conduct any activity in the RS. IFES trainers are still attending municipal assembly meetings and work with the GAINs continues, albeit on a more limited basis.

### ***IFES Information Technicians Facilitate Election Preparations***

IFES Information Technicians Mike Yard and Fitzgerald Jean, have been working with Local Election Commissions (LECs) to expand their role in the voter registration process, which is scheduled to begin in April. As part of the Local Access Project, which enables local offices to have access to the voter registry database, LECs were supplied with the necessary software and were trained in its use. Each LEC has also been asked to prepare a Voter Registration Program for its municipality. International advisers will be working with the LECs to provide technical support in the design of these plans, and will encourage national and local authorities and institutions to help support election activities. This represents an important step in strengthening state institutions and preparing the election infrastructure of BiH to take over responsibility for its own elections.

Another necessity of voter registration is to address the needs of Bosnians living abroad. IFES Information Technology Specialist Michael Yard has been working to ensure that the estimated 150,000 voters in Croatia and FRY can cast their votes in as organized and as efficient means as possible. With out of country registration scheduled to begin on 6 April, preparations are under way for entering the new information into the voter registry database. Materials for out of country voting are also being prepared, though, given the current political difficulties in the FRY and in Croatia, the distribution of materials for the use of the 150,000 voters in these countries will be more difficult.

### ***Association of Election Officials of BiH***

The Association of Election Officials of BiH is continuing to develop successfully, with assistance from the OSCE and IFES. This month, three members of the association were sponsored to attend the Annual General Meeting of the United Kingdom's Association of Election Administrators. This exercise provided the Bosnians with an opportunity to observe how a mature association operates. Regional conferences have also been organized for the association, to allow election officials to discuss the draft charter and to provide them with management training.

### ***Permanent Election Law***

IFES is active in many aspects of the development of a permanent election law. IFES Election Law Specialist Jessie Pilgrim has been active in revitalizing the Permanent Election Law Project. He has started to identify fundamental constitutional issues concerning BiH/Entity competencies that must be resolved before the drafting process begins. He is also identifying the fundamental constitutional issues concerning what electoral matters must be addressed by constitutional amendment rather than by electoral law. Finally, he is outlining the structure of the law so that the drafting process is orderly and complete.

Final preparations are being made to conduct a public information campaign for the permanent election law. IFES Public Information Specialist Elise Schoux, serving as director of the OSCE Election Department's Election Information and Civic Education Branch, has developed a poll of citizens' attitudes toward elections. The results of this questionnaire will assist Schoux's team in evaluating public understanding of elections, and will guide them as they continue to shape the information campaign. The questionnaire was tested on three diverse focus groups before being finalized. IFES' civic education trainers assisted in the polling, which was conducted from 21-24 March.

IFES also deployed Legislative Awareness Specialist Jean Lavoie to BiH, to develop and implement a legislative awareness campaign for the permanent election law. Lavoie will focus on the lobbying aspects of the information campaign. He has begun consulting with political parties and NGOs across the country, and has organized a training seminar for the election officers who were asked to participate in the information campaign.

### ***Development of Election System Models***

IFES Statistical Analyst Ben Goldsmith joined Jessie Pilgrim this month, in order to develop a series of alternative vote election system models (AV) that will help determine the most representational election system for BiH. The AV was chosen because it could result in increased representation of smaller parties by allowing for second and later preferences. The two created three models for the RS National Assembly and two for the Federal House of Representatives, based on votes from the 1997 and 1998 municipal elections. After creating and

fine-tuning the models, Pilgrim and Goldsmith are writing analyses of the models and the projected election results associated with them. The two will perform a similar analysis on the use of an open list proportional representation system.

### ***Civic Activist Groups Solving a Wide Variety of Community Problems***

As of 15 March, IFES civic education trainers have encouraged and trained 183 civic activist groups (GAINs) to work with local authorities to improve their communities throughout the Zenica, Livno and Doboje areas. These groups have worked to repair schools, rebuild roads, equip medical clinics, restore electricity, improve the water supply and improve public transportation in addition to initiating a number of other community improvements.

Two GAINs in particular made, with IFES assistance, significant progress in their efforts this month. IFES trainers were able to serve as mediators as they aided the GAINs in the villages Topalovica Kuce and Ricice with their objective to improve the water supply. These two GAINs had been putting pressure on local authorities to solve the water supply problem in the area of Bila, municipality Travnik. As a result, a meeting was called by the directors of the two water supply companies in Travnik, one controlled by Bosniaks and the other by Croats. The meeting took place in Travnik on 2 March, and, in addition to the two directors, it was attended by the director of Novi Travnik's water-supply company, Cantonal Minister for Water Forests, Municipal Secretary for Reconstruction and Development, and representatives from GAINs. As a result of this meeting, the two GAINs will have their problems resolved by the authorities in the very near future.



IFES trainer, Dragan Pavlic, with teacher and children of Cerovica, of the Doboje municipality in the Republika Srpska, in their newly reconstructed school. The reconstruction is a result of a civic initiative guided by Dragan and fellow IFES trainer Ljubinko Djuric.

A second IFES-trained civic initiative has come to fruition. On 26 March the constituting assembly of the new NGO "Zeleni Srbac" (Green Srbac) was held. Fifty-eight citizens attended including the RS Deputy Minister of Ecology. The broad attendance and smooth proceedings, which included adopting rules and appointing working groups, were largely the result of the IFES trainers' efforts in supporting the initiative committee in every step of the preparations. Members of this NGO are expected to participate in a municipality-run action for cleaning the environment in early April. It is hoped that this is the forerunner of two more ecological NGOs, one in Prnjavor and another in Teslic.

### **ESTONIA**

#### ***OSCE/ODIHR Observation Mission Declares Parliamentary Elections Free and Fair***

The OSCE/ODIHR Observation Mission to Estonia concluded that the 7 March Riigikogu Elections were carried out in accordance with Estonian law and were conducted in a transparent manner. Over 50 international observers, including IFES Program Assistant Denise Wales, observed a total of 262 of the 666 polling stations. 99% of observers indicated that the voting process at polling stations was fair to very good. 98% of observers indicated that voters' understanding of the voting process was fair to very good. Instances of group voting were mentioned by 28% of observers, and a further 9% indicated that they saw instances of open voting (i.e. not in the polling booth). However, there were no observations of any fraud or intimidation in these cases. The Mission commended the Estonian government for the introduction of advance voting and voting from abroad. This allowed a greater number of Estonian citizens to participate in the democratic process.

While the mission concluded that the overall conduct of the elections was in accordance with OSCE member standards, it did note two concerns. The first was the relatively late changes to the election law instituting a 5 percent threshold for parties. The second, which it shares with the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, was another recent amendment to the election law defining the level of Estonian language proficiency required for all candidates for elected office. It is possible that this change in the law could limit the scope of democratic participation in future elections.

Based on its findings, the Observation Mission made the following recommendations: (1) the newly elected Riigikogu should review recent election law amendments, coming into effect on 1 May, which appear to strengthen language requirements for electoral candidates to ensure they comply with the international standards; (2) Estonian officials should consider allowing the public display of campaign materials in Russian, as well as the state language, especially in areas where Russian is widely used; (3) the provision of voter information materials in languages other than Estonian should be considered in regions with significant numbers of non-

Estonian speakers, especially in regard to upcoming local elections; (3) future voter education programs should focus on securing the secrecy of the vote; and (5) newspapers should clearly state if articles are submitted by and paid for by political parties.

#### ***Right-Wing Alliance Forms Coalition Government***

The *Fatherland Union*, which won 18 seats, the *Reform Party*, also with 18 seats, and the *Moderates*, with 17, signed a coalition agreement on 17 March. The former ruling *Coalition Party*, which won 7 seats, announced its decision to go into "constructive opposition" with the *Center Party*, which holds 28 seats, the *Country People's Party*, which has 7 seats, and the *United People's Party*, which has 6 seats. (RFE/RL 3/18/99)

The new ruling coalition's candidate for prime minister, Fatherland Union Chairman Mart Laar, was endorsed by the parliament on 22 March in a 53-48 vote. The 38-year-old Laar, who was prime minister from 1992-1994, is credited with having put Estonia on the road to economic reform. He was removed from office in a no confidence vote amid accusations that, among other things, he had lied about the sale of rubles to Chechnya. The prime minister-designate said that the new government's most urgent task is to submit to the parliament a negative supplementary budget; under Estonian law the budget must be balanced. (RFE/RL 3/23/99)

## **MOLDOVA**

### ***Referendum Added to Ballot***

On 22 March, President Lucinschi announced his plan to introduce a referendum onto the 23 May ballot. The referendum asks voters to decide whether Moldova should change the Constitution to allow the President to form the government without Parliament's approval. Currently, Moldova has a parliamentary system which requires the legislative body to approve the entire cabinet.

Recently, a failure to approve the President's proposed cabinet threatened to leave the country without a government, ultimately a cabinet was approved by a single vote. Even if the May referendum to change Moldova's government is accepted by the voters, it is still not legally binding. In order for the referendum to become law, it must pass a two-thirds vote in Parliament. As the referendum has been introduced almost exactly two months before elections are to be held, some have expressed concern that there is inadequate time to inform the voters about the measure.

### ***IFES & CEC***

This month, IFES/Moldova along with the Central Election Commission (CEC) released the *Poll Worker Guide*. The book offers guidance to poll workers on a variety of situations which they may encounter on election day. The *Poll Worker Guide* will be distributed to every polling station in time for the 23 May elections.

### ***IFES & POLITICAL PARTIES***

As the campaign for local elections was launched, several political parties have requested the assistance of IFES/Moldova. In this respect, IFES/Moldova staff met with Ion Jigau, Executive Bureau of the Party of Democratic Forces, to discuss the upcoming local elections. Mr Jigau requested materials on electoral techniques as well as information on training local observers.

The upcoming local elections were also at issue during the meeting with Viorel Ciobanu, representative of the Social Democratic Bloc to the Central Electoral Commission. Mr Rosca asked whether IFES could provide data to political parties related to electoral procedures and techniques. IFES provided Mr. Rosca with the books on results of elections, along with the CD ROM on the results of the three previous election campaigns.

### ***SUPPORTING NGOS***

IFES/Moldova continues to support domestic NGOs. In this respect, Mihai Perebinos, Chairman of the Mayors Association of Moldova requested IFES' assistance in conducting an international seminar entitled "Elections and their Impact Upon Society", April 9 -10, 1999. IFES/Moldova was also invited to deliver a speech on mass media during the election campaign, whereas Paul Strudzescu of LADOM (IFES' partner) will continue work on the institution of foreign and domestic observers. Mr Perebinos praised the importance of the *Civic Voice* and requested IFES' permission to reproduce several articles.

Local public administration was a key issue during the regional seminar - "*Local Public Administration Reform in the Republic of Moldova*," hosted by IFES/Moldova and the Viitorul Foundation in the Orhei district. The seminar was attended by 60 officers from the district, six experts from the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova, and experts from the government. As a follow up to the seminar, training was held for the five groups of participants. The training focused on conflict resolution and local budgeting.

### ***Civic Voice***

In March, IFES/Moldova distributed the No. 22 issue of the *Civic Voice* newsletter. *Civic Voice* is published in both in Russian and in the official state language. Recipients of *Civic Voice* include: embassies and international organizations operating in Moldova, Parliament, the Office of the President, libraries, NGOs and the press. In view of better access to information, IFES/Moldova produced and distributed *Digest'98*, a selection of the best articles from *Civic Voice* for the year 1998 which were previously not available in Russian.

*Civic Voice* continues to receive positive response. Ghenadii Mecinikov, of the Victoria Mutual Support Fund of the Pensioners, thanked IFES/Moldova for *Civic Voice*, and

requested some copies in Russian, as not all members of the organization speak the state language.

Work continued in March on the next issue of *Civic Voice* which will include an interview with Mihai Perebinos, Chairman of the Association of Mayors of Moldova. Mr. Perebinos offered his opinions concerning the coming changes in local government, as well as areas that in his opinion still need to be addressed, such as the laws on local finance.

**RUSSIAN FEDERATION** *(continued from p. 1)*  
***State Duma Election Bill Still in Parliament as CEC Begins Preparing for December Vote***

The new State Duma Election Bill, which will bring it into accordance with the recently amended Voting Rights Act, is now pending its second reading. During the last meeting with IFES/Russia, CEC Chairman Alexander Veshniakov stated repeatedly that nothing is more paramount than passing this legislation on the Duma elections before the election campaign officially begins. President Yeltsin, in his annual address to the nation on 30 March, specified that it is absolutely necessary to conduct both parliamentary and presidential elections in a timely manner. The general consensus among legislators and policymakers is that a new State Duma Election Law must be in place not later than June for the laws to be properly implemented.

Meanwhile, CEC Chairman Veshniakov has announced that the registration of election associations for the upcoming Duma elections will begin in the middle of August. The current legislation regulating elections to the State Duma requires that the registration of parties and election associations running for the lower chamber of the Russian parliament is to begin after the election date is officially announced. The same law provides that registration of candidates must be called for not later than 120 days prior to elections - approximately 19 August.

***Primakov's Political Compromise Rejected; Yeltsin Impeachment Debates Continue***

The Communist Party of the Russian Federation, alongside other political groups in opposition to the presidential administration, played the crucial role in rejecting the political compromise plan of Russian Prime Minister Primakov. Primakov's proposal was designed to postpone or cancel an impeachment vote on President Yeltsin. Now that the chances for signing such an accord are slight, President Yeltsin has called on the Duma to either cancel the vote outright or hold it on schedule in late April. Once the impeachment procedure is in place, the President is barred from dissolving the State Duma.

***State Duma Deputy Victor Sheinis Visits Latin America***

Deputy Victor Sheinis, a member of the State Duma Committee for Legislation and Judiciary Reform, visited Peru

and Colombia on 21-27 March, on parliamentary affairs. IFES/Russia arranged several meetings with Peruvian and Colombian election officials at Dr. Sheinis' request. "The meetings were useful and were conducted in a friendly atmosphere of mutual respect," stated Dr. Sheinis. The Peruvian and Colombian election officials expressed a strong interest in the reforms currently underway in Russia and specifically in the election law reform. The parties agreed that it would be to their mutual benefit to exchange experiences and relevant materials when drafting new legislation affecting their election systems. IFES/Russia will continue to assist Dr. Sheinis and provide him with information as needed through its Moscow Resource Center. Dr. Sheinis recently visited the U.S. as part of a USIS-sponsored election observation and study group [see February 1999 *Europe & Asia Report*].

***IFES Meets with Newly Elected CEC Chairman***

During recent travel to the region, IFES' Director of Programs for Europe and Asia, Dr. Juliana Pilon, met with newly elected CEC Chairman Alexander Veshniakov to congratulate him on his recent selection and underscore the importance of the IFES-CEC relationship. The Chairman confirmed his appreciation for IFES' continued cooperation with the CEC and highly praised IFES' contribution to the strengthening of the Russian election system. Dr. Veshniakov also expressed the CEC's interest in translating a number of current IFES materials in an upcoming CEC bulletin. Dr. Pilon also took advantage of the short visit to meet with CEC Commissioner Yevgeniy Kolyushin and Alexei Avtonomov, Core Advisor to IFES' successor NGO, the Institute for Election Systems Development (IESD).

***IFES and CSIS Initiate Study Group***

IFES and the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) initiated a Russian Election Studies Group (RESG) with the first in a series of roundtable discussions on March 31. The event, held at CSIS, featured Michael McFaul, Co-Director of the Russian Domestic Politics Project, Carnegie Endowment and Assistant Professor and Hoover Institution Fellow, Stanford University, who kicked-off this meeting of the study group by addressing Russia's political scene before the elections. Although it remains too early to draw any concrete conclusions about who will be where come election days, Mr. McFaul and study group members discussed the impact of the economic crisis and Kosova conflict on the political landscape while examining new ways to approach Russia's political players. On April 21 IFES will host the second roundtable in the series. IFES Program Officer Jeffrey Carlson and IFES Election Expert Robert A. Dahl will compliment this discussion with a presentation on the electoral framework within which these political players must operate and comment on Russia's readiness for federal elections. For more information on the RESG Roundtable Series, please contact Matt Curtis at IFES.

## SLOVAKIA

### ***First Direct Election of President Set for 15 May***

Parliamentary Chairman Jozef Migas announced that Slovakia will hold its first direct election of the president on 15 May; a run-off has been scheduled for 29 May should no candidate receive more than 50% of the vote. In order to be nominated candidates must collect signatures of 15,000 Slovak citizens or signatures from at least 15 members of parliament before 9 April.

To date, five people have declared their candidacy and set out to gain the necessary signatures: former Czechoslovak ambassador to Austria Magda Vasaryova; former president Michal Kovac; Kosice mayor, chairman of the *Party for Civic Understanding (SOP)* and the government coalition's official candidate Rudolf Schuster; Jan Slota, leader of the *Slovak National party (SNS)*; and Jan Svec who is running as the *Democratic Party's (DS)* candidate. According to a poll conducted by the Nazory agency, 30% of those polled support Rudolf Schuster, 15.4% support Mrs. Vasaryova, 6.1% say they will vote for Michal Kovac, while 4.6% of those polled support Jan Slota. (*Czech News Agency, 4/1/99*)

The presidential elections have recently caused some dissension within the ruling coalition. The leader of the *Christian Democratic Movement (KDH)* and Minister of Justice Jan Carnogursky announced on 20 March that the KDH council had rejected a proposal to unite with the other four members of the ruling *Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)*. Carnogursky also said that the electoral law must be changed to allow party alliances and the SDK must become an alliance of independent political formations. (*RFE/RL, 3/22/99*) As of this writing, Rudolf Schuster has gained the signatures of only 18 of the 93 parliamentary members in the governing coalition. SOP Deputy Chairman Igor Presperin was quoted by Czech daily *Mlada Fronta Dnes* as saying that parts of *KDH, DS* and the *Democratic Union (DU)* are not fulfilling the coalition agreement that puts Schuster as its official candidate. In fact, the DS has decided to field Jan Svec as its presidential candidate.

### **IFES Proposes Assistance with Electoral Reform**

Slovak government and parliamentary officials are well aware of the damaging effects the controversies surrounding the parliamentary and municipal election laws had on the elections last year. Despite the Constitutional Court's March decision that 1998 parliamentary election law's provision restricting campaigning to state media is unconstitutional, the governing coalition recognizes there is still a need to undertake electoral and constitutional reform. As a result, Parliament has mandated the Ministry of the Interior to recommend amendments to the parliamentary election laws by the year 2000. In addition, the Parliament has formed the Commission on Revision of the Constitution (CRC) to examine and address election law and constitutional law

reform issues. This initiative, has already begun to address these issues and will be actively working in the coming months to provide solutions to the controversial parliamentary election laws.

In recent discussions with IFES Election Law Specialist Carol Conrigan, prominent members of the commission as well as officials of the Ministry of Interior (MOI) outlined a number of areas in which they believe IFES assistance would be valuable. IFES has proposed assistance for the crucial first three months of the reform process in order to help the CRC and the MOI shape the most effective course for their future efforts. Specifically, IFES has identified the following means of assistance: 1) Technical advice to the CRC and MOI; and 2) facilitation of public outreach efforts regarding electoral and constitutional reform. The IFES technical advisor to the CRC and MOI will focus on comparative models from existing democratic governments, offer objective commentary when working through difficult and controversial laws, help the group to identify the current systems' major weaknesses and create a summary of recommendations for the continuation of the reform process. The IFES/Slovakia office and its election law specialist will be responsible for encouraging public information efforts and be available to serve as a link between the CRC, MOI and the NGO community, essentially keeping its local partners and other interested NGOs abreast of the progress being made toward electoral law reform.

IFES believes such assistance will fortify the Slovak government's efforts to address the issue of electoral and constitutional reform sooner rather than later. In light of the recent friction among the governing coalition members regarding presidential candidates this could become of even greater necessity. Therefore, upon approval of the proposed assistance, IFES will begin immediately to help ensure that a parliamentary election law is in place for the next parliamentary elections.

## UKRAINE

### ***Parliament Passes Election Law***

Parliament passed a new presidential election law 5 March by a two-thirds majority, effectively overriding President Kuchma's attempts to alter the law. President Kuchma returned the original election law presented to him by Parliament and suggested a number of changes. Parliament, however, passed the law by the two-thirds vote after implementing only 56 of President Kuchma's 321 proposed changes.

The rejected suggestions included a shortening of the campaign period from 180 days to 120 and other measures which critics argued would have given President Kuchma, as the incumbent, an unfair advantage. President Kuchma signed the new law 22 March.



### ***Central Election Commission Appeals for More Funds***

Chairman of the Central Election Commission (CEC), Mykhailo Ryabets, has appealed to the Budgetary Committee of Parliament for more funds to conduct the October presidential elections. According to Chairman Ryabets, the original budget allows for 75 million Hryvna to be spent on presidential elections in 1999, but the CEC estimates that a single round of balloting will cost 141 million Hryvna, and a second round, if necessary, would cost an additional 24.8 million Hryvna. According to the new Law, if no candidate receives a simple majority of the votes in the first round of presidential elections, a second round of elections is held between the two candidates receiving the most votes in the first round of balloting.

### ***Adjudication of Disputes Conference Deemed a Success***

On 18-19 March IFES, in cooperation with the ARD/CHECCHI Rule of Law Consortium and the Supreme Court of Ukraine, hosted the conference the Adjudication of Electoral Disputes by the Courts of Ukraine. The conference gave Ukrainian judges a chance to discuss issues surrounding the process of challenging election results in the courtroom.

Ukraine's experience in the 1998 parliamentary elections served as the basis for the conference, and judges interacted with legislators, international experts, and the members of the NGO community to exchange views on lessons learned. Response by participants to the conference was decidedly favorable and plans are in the works to develop a series of conferences for judges on the subject of the adjudication of electoral disputes. As the 1998 parliamentary elections demonstrated, the process by which electoral disputes are resolved needs to be made more efficient if the presidential elections are to avoid the type of confusion that surrounded last year's elections. The need for change is clearly evident by the fact that some seats have remained empty more than a year after elections as a result of an open-ended appeal process.

IFES was represented at the conference by both David Earl, IFES Project Director in Kyiv and Judge Bohdan Futey of the US Court of Federal Claims. The topic of presentations included the role of the CEC in dispute adjudication, the adjudication process from the plaintiff's perspective, legislative issues in the adjudication of electoral disputes, and the reform of Ukraine's court system to better address electoral dispute adjudication.

Based on the comments of the participants, several recommendations were drafted. The recommendations are: the introduction of amendments and revisions to the current electoral legislation of Ukraine; the creation of a program to improve the legal culture of all participants in the electoral process, including the training of judges, polling station officials, and development of a general public education program; and the possibility of creating a special court to handle election disputes.

### ***Cooperation and Partnership with the CEC***

In March, IFES continued its close cooperation with the CEC. Preparations were finalized for the publication of the CEC's report *Ukraine Elections '98, Experiences, Problems and Prospects*. The report follows the conference of the same name held in November 1998. IFES will assist the CEC with financing the publication. Three thousand copies of the report

will be distributed to universities, parliamentarians, NGOs and other interested parties.

The CEC also presented IFES with a new Memorandum of Understanding, outlining areas of cooperation for the coming year. As part of this agreement, IFES will be providing the CEC with experts to train poll workers, create public service announcements to air on television and radio regarding changes in the presidential election law, and host a media conference to bring legislators and the press together to discuss their respective roles in the coming elections.

## **FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA -KOSOVO**

### ***Peace Talks Re-Convened with No Success***

After the failure of the Rambouillet Peace Talks to produce an agreement between the Serbian and Kosovar delegations, the hosts called a recess to the talks until 15 March. During the recess, international leaders applied pressure to both sides to sign the Agreement proposed by the international community at Rambouillet. The Kosovar Albanians were particularly pressed to sign the agreement, since it was felt that a signature from them would force the Serbian delegation to do so as well. Nonetheless, the Kosovar Albanian delegation did not sign the Agreement before the beginning of the next round of talks, which began in Paris on 15 March. It became clear from the beginning of the talks that the Serbs would not agree to any agreement which included the stationing of NATO troops in the province of Kosovo to enforce it. The ethnic Albanian delegation unilaterally signed the agreement on 18 March, and the talks were disbanded shortly thereafter.

### ***KVM Monitors Leave Yugoslavia***

While negotiations were being conducted in Paris, Milosevic moved some 30,000 troops into and around Kosovo. It became clear that all peace talks had failed and that the presence of the Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) was no longer serving as a deterrent to the escalation of violence. Therefore, on 20 March, the OSCE withdrew its 1,400 civilian monitors from Kosovo. The KVM mission, including the IFES team, was moved to Skopje, and, within the following days, all but core personnel were disbanded.

### ***Preparing for Elections in Kosovo***

IFES continued its activities in Kosovo, working within the OSCE's KVM until 20 March, when the KVM left Yugoslavia. During the first three weeks of the month, IFES continued its project activities in Kosovo, and began to establish the basis of the necessary structures for elections.

IFES Legal Expert Dan Blessington, working as KVM Legal Advisor on Elections, drafted a plan for the legal components of elections. He traveled to Vienna, where he participated in the development of the legal operation. He also formulated a proposal for the establishment of a CEC Secretariat, and

drafted expert legal advice for changes to the electoral aspects of the Rambouillet agreement.

The IFES team also began preparations for the formation of a working group to discuss election issues not addressed in the Rambouillet agreement, including Rules and Regulations. Invitations were sent to prominent figures in the Albanian community. The issues to be discussed initially included different aspects of voter participation and registration, as well as the structure of election commissions.

#### ***IFES Team Withdraws from Kosovo***

The IFES Team withdrew from Kosovo on 20 March, together with the rest of the KVM. The Team members continued their work with the OSCE, both in Macedonia, where the KVM was stationed after evacuating, and at OSCE headquarters in Vienna. However, since Yugoslavia is in a state of war, it is unlikely that the development of the electoral process will become a priority in the very near future. IFES has therefore temporarily suspended the activities of its Kosovo Team. All Team members, both those stationed within the KVM and those coordinating in Vienna, have been recalled.

### **FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA – MONTENEGRO**

#### ***Montenegro Refuses to Recognize Declaration of State of Emergency***

On 23 March, Yugoslav Prime Minister Momir Bulatovic proclaimed a state of imminent threat of war for Yugoslavia. Shortly thereafter, a Montenegrin government press officer reported that Montenegro did not recognize Bulatovic's declaration. The Yugoslav declaration was then upgraded to a state of emergency on 24 March. Montenegrin officials responded with a report that the Yugoslav military would not be allowed access to Montenegrin facilities or territory in any fight against NATO forces. Montenegrins have long feared that Belgrade could use any such declaration as a pretense to intervene in Montenegro.

#### ***Albright Tells Milosevic Not to Move Against Montenegro***

Secretary of State Madeline Albright warned Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic on 25 March that, "any attempt to either overthrow the democratically elected government [of Montenegro] or to create instability would lead to deeper isolation for the Serbs, for Yugoslavia, and escalate the conflict with NATO." ("RFE/RL Newswire", 26 March 1999) Secretary Albright reiterated this position during a phone conference with Montenegrin President Milo Djukanovic on 29 March.

#### ***IFES Completes Legal Reform Project***

The IFES legal reform project in Montenegro concluded at the end of March following the submission of model election laws to the Government of Montenegro. During the span of the project, IFES, working together with its Advisory Panel on Election Law Reform, addressed a range of issues in the

development of the model laws, including: voter eligibility and registration, the nomination process and compilation of candidate lists, campaign finance, the adjudication of grievances, ballot security and accountability and overall election administration practices. One of the most important features included in the model laws is the establishment of a truly permanent Republican Election Commission with a staff that would be given broader regulatory authority over the election process during and between election periods. The model law package was formally presented to Montenegrin legislative, judiciary, executive and non-governmental representatives in February. IFES hopes to return to Montenegro to proceed with the implementation phase of the law project, which would include training of election commissions on the model laws.

### **CAUCASUS / CENTRAL ASIA**

#### **ARMENIA**

#### ***IFES/Armenia and Central Election Commission and Sponsor Seminar for REC Members***

On March 29, IFES/Armenia in cooperation with the CEC sponsored a day long seminar for current Regional Election Commission (REC) members. The purpose of the seminar was to introduce the current REC members to the requirements of the new Universal Electoral Code (UEC) including their duties and responsibilities until the end of their terms of office at the end of April. Main topics covered in depth by various international and domestic experts included the administrative implications of the new electoral code, requirements of the nomination process, and the compilation of the voters lists and rights of domestic observers. The seminar was led by CEC Chairman Khachatour Bezirjian and 23 members of RECs from seven regions attended.

At the conclusion of the seminar, REC members signed a code of conduct pledging to administer the May election in a fair and impartial manner. This event marked the first time that election officials in Armenia have signed such a document and all in attendance agreed that signing the code would contribute to a more transparent and honest administration of the election. Chairman Bezirjian remarked upon receiving the signed codes of conduct that REC members should reaffirm their commitment to the code of conduct as often as possible.



An Armenian regional electoral commission member signs the Code of Conduct pledging to administer the May elections in an impartial manner.

#### ***Reference Guides Distributed to RECs and Community Heads***

At the March 29 seminar and over the following week, a reference guide for REC members developed by IFES consultant Judith Davis in cooperation with the CEC was distributed to all regions of Armenia. The guide is an easy-to-use handbook for REC members that explains their responsibilities under the new electoral code. In addition to the reference guides, IFES/Armenia also distributed 20 copies of the new UEC. Copies of Community Heads Guidebook were also distributed to each region. This distribution effort was accomplished with the full support and assistance of the CEC and regional governor's offices.

In the run up to the May election, IFES also plans to print and distribute 4000 copies of the UEC to regional and local level election officials, political parties, Community Heads and domestic and international NGOs.

#### ***UEC Amended by National Assembly***

Armenia's newly adopted Universal Electoral Code(UEC) remained a contentious issue in March as it became evident that changes were inadvertently made to the law signed by President Robert Kocharian on February 17th. Hence, on March 9 the National Assembly began debate on the validity of these changes to the UEC. In the debate, which lasted for most of a week, members of Parliament discussed not only these misprints, but also amendments in the Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia on issues related to administrative and criminal sanctions against electoral frauds and irregularities. These discussions ended with a vote in which 100 MPs voted for the amendments and misprints with none against and no abstentions. On March 19 the National Assembly extraordinary session discussed the changes or amendments to the UEC in the second reading, as well as

changes in the Criminal Code on issues related to sanctions and penalties related to electoral frauds and irregularities. The National Assembly then passed the amended UEC in the second reading, and the changes were subsequently approved by President Kocharian.

#### ***Impact Summary***

The joint IFES/Armenia-CEC seminar for REC members was an important first step in preparing election administrators to administer the elections in a fair and responsible manner. Likewise, with the production and distribution of reference guides for REC members and Community heads, IFES/Armenia contributed to the orderly organization of the May elections. Finally, the printing and dissemination of the UEC will increase the level of knowledge of the law by election officials, political party observers and NGO representatives. Significantly, all these documents and activities were planned, prepared and carried out with the consent and cooperation of the CEC under the IFES/CEC Memorandum of Understanding.

## **AZERBAIJAN**

#### ***Changes to IFES Azerbaijan Project Team***

The new IFES/Azerbaijan Project Manager, Alan Wall, arrived in Baku on March 19, following several days of briefings in Washington DC. Wall arrives in Baku following a number of years of international electoral consulting, most recently as the United Nations Chief Technical Adviser to the Nigerian Independent National Electoral Commission. Following a week of familiarization briefings with Wall, Michael Svetlik, Senior Project Assistant, who had kept the office open over the past ten weeks, departed Baku to return to IFES Washington via Tbilisi, Georgia, and Yerevan, Armenia.

#### ***Ballot Numbering Machine B Transfer of Funds to CEC***

On March 17, a letter from IFES President Richard Soudriette was delivered to the CEC Chairman Jafar Aliyev formally advising that IFES with funds from USAID had transferred to the CEC \$36,600 to cover the cost of a ballot numbering machine purchased in 1998 by the CEC. It is intended that this machine, with another identical machine financed by the UK Government, be used for numbering ballots for all future elections in Azerbaijan, as an aid to prevent fraud.

#### ***Meetings with Azerbaijan Government Bodies***

As part of its continuing cooperation with the Government of Azerbaijan in the development of electoral frameworks, and to introduce new Project Manager Wall to key electoral officials, meetings were held during the last two weeks of March with CEC Chair Jafar Veliyev, Deputy Chair Nizami Zafarov, Chair of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Local Government Prof. Zahid Qaralov and his assistant Huseyn Sevdin. The focus of all meetings was the progress being made in amending legislation governing the composition and

functions of the CEC, and the election and operations of municipal councils.

### ***Legislative Analysis***

With municipal elections scheduled to be held in Azerbaijan during the period September to November 1999, much attention is being paid to both the framework intended for municipal government, and the legal framework for municipal elections.

The government, and several of the opposition parties, have proposed drafts of a law to govern the conduct of municipal elections. IFES/Azerbaijan has produced a quick reference guide comparing the important features of these. IFES/Azerbaijan is in the process of preparing a similar analysis of the government's, and opposition parties', proposed drafts for a new law on the Central Election Committee (CEC). Establishing a CEC that enjoys the confidence of government and opposition political parties will be crucial for ensuring wide community participation and acceptance of the scheduled municipal elections. Along with other international bodies, IFES/Azerbaijan is actively engaged in advising on issues connected with the proposed CEC law.

### ***Framework for Introduction of Elected Municipal Government***

IFES/Azerbaijan has also been involved in detailed discussions with the Parliamentary Permanent Committee on Local Government regarding the comprehensive legal framework for municipal government in Azerbaijan. Drafts of the proposed legislation and dependent regulations have not yet been provided to IFES. However the sheer number of laws involved serves to emphasize the amount of work that will need to be done to complete preparations in time for the introduction of fully elected local government structures planned for autumn 1999.

The proposed draft legal framework for municipal government includes 14 laws and seven regulations, all of which are currently being developed by the Permanent Committee. The laws consist of four that define municipal government bodies: on municipal elections; on the status of municipal bodies; on local referendums; and on determining municipal boundaries, amalgamating and creating new municipalities. A further ten laws deal with the functions and powers of municipal government: on management of municipal property; financial systems; municipal taxes; transferring current state property to municipal government; the status of municipal councils; water supply; municipal lands; municipal services; municipal police; and the principles of mutual relations between municipal councils and organs of state. The seven proposed draft regulations deal with other important local governance issues: a model charter for a municipal council; a model regulation on territorial self government; the establishment of a permanent Administrative Commission in each municipality; the

establishment of a Coordination Council of Municipalities to represent municipalities at the state level; a code for council members; terms of office of municipal councils; and a regulation on the Department of local Self Government within the President's Office.

As yet, the number of local government areas to be created and for which councils are to be elected has not been announced.

### ***Augmentation Of Resource Center Materials***

Electoral legislation from around 60 countries, compiled in electronic format during new Project Manager Wall's research while writing for the Administration and Cost of Elections (ACE) Project, is now available in the fledgling Baku Resource Center. These legislative reference holdings will be added when research time is available. The Resource Center has distributed five copies of the ACE Project CD-ROM during March, to both government bodies developing election frameworks, and to other international NGO's providing electoral assistance in Azerbaijan.

## **GEORGIA**

### ***Conference on Georgian Elections***

The long-awaited Conference on Georgia Elections was held by IFES/Georgia, sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development. The Conference, led by IFES/Georgia Project Manager Hugh Stohler, was initially planned as a post-election evaluation of the 1998 municipal elections, but timing also made it a major event in start-up planning for the upcoming parliamentary elections. The seventy participants who gathered for the one-day forum included representatives of almost all major government and non-government organizations that share concerns for strengthening democratic election structures in Georgia: election commissions, Parliament, the government, political parties, media, Georgian NGOs, and international NGOs and donors. Structured workshops led by trained moderators focused on topical issues such as the legal structure for the elections, planning and managing the elections, political parties, voter registration, election financing, the public interest, election day operations, and post-election follow-up. Along with generating considerable agreement on identifying issues to be improved or changed for future elections, lively group discussions also provided a picture of the strong argument and debate that characterizes the current political spectrum in Georgia. Unfortunately some parliamentary members were unable to participate in the conference due to plenary sessions of parliament which were called for the same day. During the following week, IFES/Georgia conducted a series of smaller meetings with conference participants to follow-up on selected issues raised at the conference.

### ***Georgia Budget in Doldrums***

Parliament and the Georgian government unhappily bowed to joint pressures exerted internally by its own sluggish economy and externally by demands from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank by adopting an austerity budget for 1999. The budget pinch was reflected immediately by the funds allocated to the Central Election Commission of only 1.5 million lari (\$697,700.00) to produce the upcoming October parliamentary elections, a job for which the Commission estimates they will need 3.7 million lari (\$1,720,930.00). In addition, the Commission expects to feel the effect of a general reduction-in-force of staff that will apply across the board to all government offices. The latest budget crunch hits the CEC at a time when they are also under pressure to conduct a voter registration program before the next election.

#### ***Parliamentary Works on Revision of the Election Law***

Earlier this year, the leadership of the Parliament of Georgia assigned, to its Legal Affairs Committee, the task of reviewing the Georgian election law with a view toward amending it before the October 1999 parliamentary elections. In March the Legal Affairs Committee began its discussions of how the law should be changed. Early in the process consensus emerged for amending the present law rather than to attempt a rewrite of the entire law. There was considerable agreement on issues to be improved or changed for future elections, including: adjudication of complaints, enhancing a system of voter registration and reducing the size of election commissions from the Central Election Commission down to the local level.

#### ***IFES Advises on the Election Law***

IFES directly assisted in the process of legal revision by providing election law specialist Antonia Dolar as a consultant to the Legal Affairs Committee of Parliament. During her two-week consultancy Ms. Dolar prepared formal comments on the existing election law and drafted legal responses on specific issues as requested by the Legal Affairs Committee. She also participated in the Conference on Georgian Elections and the follow-up meetings, in addition to devising a calendar of election events based on the existing election law. This election law consultancy is one step in a longer-range IFES commitment of providing election law consultation in support of the eventual creation of a universal electoral code within the Law of Georgia. Such a code would govern the basic structure of all future elections in Georgia.

## **KAZAKHSTAN**

#### ***Media Seminar in Astana***

A seminar sponsored by IFES, Internews, and USIS concerning media relations was held for members of the Majilis on 2 March at the Parliament building in Astana. Mr. Baygeldi, Chairman of the Senate (the Upper House), opened the one-day seminar with U.S. Ambassador Richard Jones welcoming participants to the event. This collaborative effort highlighted the networking accomplishments between officials

from the Government of Kazakhstan and American NGOs. All parliament deputies and a number of media representatives were invited to participate in the seminar.

John Anderson, former U.S. Congressman, and Steve Bass, Legislative Media Expert from the Wisconsin State Legislature, spoke first on "Working with the Media to Encourage Positive Relationships," and then moved to a discussion on "Press Privileges and Reporting on Legislative Actions." In a later session, Mr. Anderson and Jerry Huffman of Internews joined IFES Project Coordinator Marat Bigaliev for a presentation on "Mass Media and Debates." Bigaliev gave an overview of the history of televised candidate debates and forums in the Central Asian Republics, which IFES has been involved with since 1997. The seminar closed with a panel discussion during which the participants questioned local journalists and visiting media experts. The debate session and seminar was deemed a success by both observers and participants. Mr. Baygeldi was appreciative of the IFES co-sponsorship and expressed a desire to conduct similar seminars in the future.

#### ***Upcoming Parliamentary Elections Announced***

In a speech delivered to a Joint Meeting of parliament on 31 March, President Nursultan Nazarbayev confirmed that parliamentary elections would be held for the 77 deputy seats of the Majilis on 9 October. The President also announced new legislation that reduces candidate-filing fees by 50% for parliament, and 90% for the post of president.

The October elections will introduce a proportional representation electoral system, which provides 10 new seats in the Majilis for 'national' deputies. These seats will be allocated on the basis of total votes for each political party, and not by the current district basis, thus providing incentives and mechanisms for political parties to actively engage in election campaigning. Reaffirming his stated commitment to the democratization of the electoral system, Nazarbyaev also announced that direct elections to local *akimats* would begin in the year 2000. Other proposals submitted to the parliament include the implementation of structures intended to facilitate coordination between branches of Government, including laws on the President, Parliament, the Committee and Commissions of Parliament, and on the Republican Referendum.

#### ***CEC Secretary Attends AAEA Meeting***

In early March, CEC Secretary Elena Kuleshova traveled to Katmandu, Nepal to attend the Executive Board meeting of the Association of Asian Election Authorities (AAEA), an event sponsored by IFES, which continued in its role as the Interim Secretariat of the Association. At the meeting, Kuleshova conferred with the other AAEA Board members from the election commissions of Nepal, Taiwan, and Sri Lanka, to plan the direction and future activities of the Association. Among the administrative topics discussed were the selection and establishment of a permanent Secretariat, the

need for continued and diversified funding for the Association's activities, collection of annual dues, clarification of the AAEA Charter, and expansion of the Association webpage. Future programmatic ideas were discussed as well: an exchange of election officials among the member commissions, continued election observation missions, discussion topics for the next full Association meeting, etc. The next activity by the Association will be an election observation mission to Indonesia for the 7 June 1999 national elections.

#### ***Voter Registration and Electoral Refinements***

Zagipa Balieva, Chairwoman of the CEC, assisted with the completion of the Survey of National Level Election Authorities and provided IFES with the final results of the presidential elections in Kazakhstan. Both documents have been forwarded to the IFES/Washington Resource Center. Chairwoman Balieva indicated that the CEC is working on voter registration issues and updating a final voter register for election districts around the country. The CEC will employ a computerized vote count and voter registration system in the near future, possibly in time for local and parliamentary elections later in 1999. The CEC of Kazakhstan has expressed its interest in working more closely with IFES in gathering information on comparative electoral legislation for use in revising its own election code. Balieva mentioned that there is a great interest in proportional electoral systems, as well as issues related to voter motivation. The CEC has recently been adopting a more active role in collecting materials to increase the professionalization of election administration and the expansion of citizen participation in the electoral process.

#### ***Electoral Options Weighed***

Marat Bigaliev met with Mr. Sergei Gmyria, the Head Specialist of the Internal Affairs Department of the Ministry of Culture, Information and Public Accord (MCIPA). Mr. Gmyria's interest in seeking out IFES advice stems from MCIPA involvement in issues relating to the political process, elections, political party development and intra-ethnic relations. Specifically, MCIPA has become engaged in proposing amendments to the current Constitution and Election Decree of Kazakhstan concerning election to the Majilis by proportional representation. In addition, the Ministry of Justice has been developing new amendments to the Election Decree, yet has expressed alternative viewpoints in adopting a proportional election system. MCIPA is planning to conduct a number of seminars on mass media, political parties and elections, and are particularly interested in inviting an IFES expert to make a presentation at a seminar on election topics, scheduled to take place in May 1999.

#### ***IFES Civic Education Participation***

Representatives from IFES/Astana met with scholars from the Higher Law School "ADILET" to discuss the possibility of joint projects, which would target youth and young voters in making informed decisions during elections. Young voter

participation in the election process is one of the goals of educational institutions and NGOs in Kazakhstan, and IFES has pledged to support in the establishment of young voter clubs and democracy summer camps.

Marat Bigaliev received an invitation from Mrs. Tatiana Silkina, Deputy of the Majilis and the President of the "Alive Sons" Association of Kazakhstan, to attend a seminar entitled "On Conditions and Observance of the Rights and Freedom of Servicemen in the Internal Army of the Republic of Kazakhstan" which took place on 30 March. Mr. Bigaliev discussed the guarantees set out in the election law guaranteeing servicemen the right to vote and participate fully in the election process. Military voting has been a theme covered in past IFES technical reports.

#### ***Nazarbayev Cites IFES Civic Education Assistance***

A draft textbook prepared by Dr. Juliana Pilon, IFES Director of Programs for Europe and Asia, was highlighted by President Nursultan Nazarbayev in a speech before the Majilis in Astana on 30 March. Nazarbayev, in outlining his plans for the improvement of the election law and initiatives to enhance education of the electorate, noted the IFES contribution in targeting the young and future electorate with information designed to increase their knowledge of democracy and their rights as citizens. The President has pledged his full support of the idea to incorporate the contribution of local authors to reinforce the draft text and develop a teaching curriculum.

Through its Almaty and Washington, D.C. Resource Centers, IFES continues to follow up on specific requests for election-related information from Kazakhstan lawmakers, government and election officials, and other professionals. In March, IFES collected and disseminated information on a variety of topics, including electoral systems, ethical and professional observation of elections, code of conduct, and similar issues relating to the upcoming parliamentary elections in Kazakhstan scheduled for October 1999.

#### ***Impact Summary***

The Government of Kazakhstan has taken positive steps towards instituting transparency and necessary confidence on the election system. The movement towards creating a multiparty political system has seen some legitimate changes, including initiating a system of proportional representation, the lowering of candidate filing fees, and the role of the CEC in conducting strategy seminars for political parties prior to the elections to help create an atmosphere of genuine democratic competition. These incentives if ultimately implemented could contribute to the strengthening of multiparty democracy in Kazakhstan, along with providing a more level playing field for candidates. The registration "Azamat" and the Republican National Party were also positive developments. Though restrictive legislation still exists that prohibits full participation of individual candidates, IFES has served as an information conduit for legislators,

NGOs and election officials. The main focus of its activities in Kazakhstan in March was to share its informational resources with parliamentarians, NGOs and journalists for the purpose of planning joint civic education initiatives. Civic outreach involvement activities, such as the draft civics textbook and curriculum, will comprise the bulk of IFES activity in Kazakhstan in 1999.

## KYRGYZSTAN

### *IFES Provides Technical Assistance for Upcoming Local Elections*

IFES election administration specialist Tom Parkins arrived in Bishkek to serve as a short-term technical advisor and training specialist. Parkins will be providing similar assistance to prepare for local election administrators for elections at the Oblast and Rayon levels, scheduled to take place in October.

Parkins will develop a brochure of election guidelines and a pollworker training manual for election administrators, in cooperation with the CEC, which corresponds to the forthcoming changes to the election code. A “training-of-trainers” approach will be used to present the manuals to local election officials. The election law is expected to pass in the Jogorku Kenesh in the spring. Election law consultant John Christman provided assistance on recurring discussions for preparation of the sixth, and latest, draft.

## TAJIKISTAN

### *Election Law Seminar*

IFES/Tajikistan is continuing the selection of participants for the upcoming Election Law Seminar. So far the respective participants for the Seminar include representatives of CEC, CNR, Majlisi Oli, Presidential Apparatus, Supreme Court, Constitutional Court, Dushanbe Hukumat, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Political Parties, and local NGOs. There are also arrangements underway to bring in experts from Russia, Europe, and Iran in coordination with the OSCE.

### *Collaboration on Voter Education Project*

The Youth NGO SAMT and the Director of the summer camp Svetlana Blagoveschenskaya, has created a region-wide project for summer camps in Tajikistan. IFES provided a project overview and curriculum template to all NGOs involved in the project. NGOs from other Central Asian States have expressed interest in developing the Voter Education Summer Camp Project involving young persons in the grassroots level. Similar joint projects are also being considered among the NGO community in Tajikistan with the possibility of conducting a region-wide event later in the year that would target youth and women.

Behzod Mingboev has started preparations for the project, which will train up to 3000 domestic observers for elections in

Tajikistan this year. NGOs *Shark* and *Traditions* are anticipated being IFES’ main partners.

### *Impact Summary*

With the completion of the assessment period (Phase I) and design of the voter registration project, IFES made preparations to enter Phase III, which will culminate in a period of open voter registration. Working through the Government of Tajikistan and the CEC to identify a building to house the Computer Center as well as concluding a Memorandum of Understanding on the approach to voter registration.

IFES is actively engaged in supporting the building of an electoral infrastructure that will ultimately guide future elections and referenda. Working under the guidance of USAID, IFES is committed to cooperation with its international partners in helping the commission on National Reconciliation implement the Peace Accord and with local NGOs on grassroots civic education initiatives.

## UZBEKISTAN

### *IFES and PEC cooperate on the “Model of the Democratic Society”*

Lola Maksudova met with Muborak Tashpulatova, the Public Education Center (PEC), to discuss the forthcoming IFES-sponsored civic education project based on summer camps. The project is planned for this summer for young and future voters. The draft project proposed by PEC and IFES seeks to introduce young citizens to democratic ideals and civil society through the study of democratic structures, the role played by citizens and officials in the process of democracy building, and by way of a practical workshop involving activities that further conceptualize the development of democracy. Specific topics to be addressed include:

- Civic responsibility (the rights and responsibilities of citizens; civic ethics; knowledge of laws and legislation; law adherence; discussion on the questions on democracy; leadership);
- Democratic elections as an important part of democratic society building; young people should realize the importance of open and fair elections;
- The election campaign (pre-election phase; political parties and their platforms, independent candidates; election legislation; speech making; principals of political structure building); and
- Media (the participants will be divided into two groups; media consumers and professional reporters; analysis of reports and interpretation of political slogans and calls; report writing).

### ***Impact Summary***

The IFES/PEC partnership is focused on providing civic education to young and future voters, but also includes a component of development of civic action NGOs across Uzbekistan. IFES project staff recently visited Bukhara and identified an opportunity to establish a linkage there among civic advocacy organizations that seek the betterment of society through understanding of democracy and citizen action.

## **ASIA**

### **ASSOCIATION OF ASIAN ELECTION OFFICIALS (AAEA)**

#### ***Executive Board Meeting***

The first meeting of the Executive Board was held on 5 March 1999 in Kathmandu, Nepal, at the invitation of Bishnu Pratap Shah, Chief Commissioner of the Election Commission of Nepal and Chairman of the AAEA Executive Board. The other members of the Executive Board are the election authorities of Taiwan, Sri Lanka, and Kazakhstan. IFES, as Interim Secretariat, prepared the logistics and helped set the agenda for the meeting. The following people attended the meeting: from IFES, Mr. Jeffrey Fischer and Ms. Deepika Dayal; from the Election Commission of Nepal, Mr. Bishnu Pratap Shah; from the Central Election Commission of Kazakhstan, Mrs. Elena Kuleshova; from the Central Election Commission of Taiwan, Ms. Li-Hwei Chen, Ms. Hui-Wen Yao, and Mr. Ming-Hsien Yu; and from the Department of Elections of Sri Lanka, Mr. M.C. Arunthavachelvam. The Board members faced many pressing administrative and programmatic issues:

- the status of the vacant seat on the AAEA Executive Board;
- establishment of a permanent AAEA Secretariat;
- the problem of finding continued and diversified funding;
- publications and resource development; and
- future exchange activities and observation missions.

#### ***Permanent Secretariat Discussed***

The Board meeting began with welcoming remarks by both Commissioner Shah and Mr. Fischer. Afterwards, in recognition of IFES' role as an Interim Secretariat, the Board discussed the need to begin searching for a site to establish a permanent Secretariat. Mr. Fischer explained that while IFES would continue its role for the time being, the Board needed to begin considering the criteria by which they would select a location for a permanent AAEA Secretariat. Factors such as a central location, secure communication lines, continuous funding, and political stability were discussed. The Board decided that a search committee should be formed to determine the criteria for establishing a permanent Secretariat and to prepare a presentation for the entire Association. The Board requested IFES' assistance with this objective, and the

election authorities of Sri Lanka and Kazakhstan volunteered to be on the search committee.

#### ***Charter Clarified***

Commissioner Shah requested clarification in the language of the AAEA Charter as to whether the Board is comprised of central election commissions or individuals from those commissions. After a lengthy discussion, it was determined that the intent of the Charter had been to have the CEC itself serve as the Board member, not an individual from a CEC. Therefore, in the case of a CEC chair leaving office, the Board seat would automatically be passed to that person's replacement. It would be up to the replacement to decide whether s/he wanted to maintain the Board seat; if not, the seat would be considered vacant and open for nomination from the Assembly. Language to this effect will be drafted and distributed to the entire Assembly for their consideration as an amendment to the Charter.

#### ***Dues Payment Discussed***

The payment of dues to the AAEA was discussed, and the level of dues for Association members (\$500 per year) was upheld. IFES Executive Vice President Jeff Fischer reminded the Board members that dues were established to offset the operating costs of the Association and its activities, and at a level that would not be a financial burden to the individual member commissions. Dues further represent a real commitment by the member commissions to the Association. It was decided that IFES, as Interim Secretariat, would send members a notice regarding the status of their membership.

#### ***New Programmatic Activities Planned***

The Board discussed updating and expanding the Association homepage, which is currently housed within the IFES website, to make it a more comprehensive and user-friendly resource tool. Kazakhstan CEC Secretary Elena Kuleshova suggested adding news of upcoming elections and electoral results to the AAEA homepage as well. Plans were made for creating an electronic newsletter, designing an Association logo, and adding Chinese language text to the website.

Several new project activities were discussed: the most popular of which was the exchange of election officials among the member countries. Jeff Fischer described how the National Association of Secretaries of State participates in such a program by allowing staff from foreign election commissions to intern at a US state election commission. Costs may be minimized on these exchanges if the election official continues to draw his home salary and a travel grant is provided to help cover costs incurred. The details remain to be worked out, and if the AAEA engages in such an exchange of officials, funding will need to be secured on a case-by-case basis.





The AAEA Executive Board met in early March in Kathmandu to discuss association activities for the coming year; the meeting was hosted by Chairman Bishnu Pratap Shah of the Election Commission of Nepal (facing camera).

The Board then turned its attention to the upcoming observation mission to Indonesia, where national elections are scheduled for 7 June 1999. Jeff Fischer described the Protocol of Quito and the Protocol of Tikal, two documents that bind its signatories to having an open invitation to the other signatories to observe elections in their country. The Board found these observation mechanisms interesting, and suggested that we provide further information to the AAEA for discussion at the next full Association meeting. Preparation for the Indonesia mission will soon be underway, and IFES, as Interim Secretariat, is working on the parameters and details for the observation team. While funding for this observation has been provided in part by USAID, travel grants will be sought for the AAEA participants.

#### ***GEO Conference to be Attended***

Executive Board representatives Zagipa Balieva of the Kazakhstan Central Election Commission and Dayananda Dissanayake of the Election Commission of Sri Lanka will represent the Association at the Global Electoral Organizations (GEO) Conference in Ottawa, Canada. The GEO Conference is scheduled to take place in mid-April and is sponsored by Elections Canada, the United Nations, International IDEA, and IFES. The Global Electoral Organization (GEO) Network Conference is the first worldwide meeting of regional associations of election officers. As such, it represents a unique opportunity for participants and observers to explore the role of the

association and the election authority in the democratic process. Participants will have the opportunity for informal exchanges about possible collaboration and cooperative ventures in electoral governance. This Conference will also provide a resource dimension through the participation of international organizations, bilateral development agencies, and others interested in supporting democratic processes.

#### ***Impact Summary***

The first Executive Board meeting of the Association of Asian Election Authorities succeeded in setting an agenda for itself for the next several months. A future Board meeting was scheduled for early next year, with a full Association meeting to follow in early 2001. The next Association activity will be the election observation mission to Indonesia, for which IFES as Interim Secretariat has already begun planning. The Association continues to grow in membership size and strength, and stands ready to become an even more active organization in the promotion of democratic processes, electoral reform, and the promotion of free and fair elections.

## **INDONESIA**

#### ***Impact Summary***

IFES program activities in Indonesia expanded during the month of March 1999 to include the following areas of impact: (1) continued assistance to the Indonesian General Election Committee (KPU) on the interpretation of the election laws and draft regulations, as well as the adjudication of disputes process; (2) additional recommendations to the KPU on the structure of the commission, and technical election administration; (3) final analysis of the IFES national survey of the Indonesian electorate, and briefings on the findings in Jakarta; (4) preliminary implementation of a nationwide voter education campaign, and planning for the creation of a Joint Operations and Media Center (JOMC) for the KPU to facilitate the reporting of election results; and (5) introductory activities targeting the training of poll workers.

#### ***Election Laws***

IFES election law specialist Bob Dahl provided analysis of the Indonesian election laws in order to assist the KPU in its process of making policy decisions regarding the implementing regulations for the law. Mr. Dahl's report on the election laws was distributed to Chairman Rudini and the full membership of the KPU. The analysis also dealt with issues regarding the eligibility of government officials as candidates, and to some extent several campaign finance considerations. Mr. Dahl also met with USAID legal specialist Patricia Kendall and members of the Indonesian Supreme Court to discuss the system of addressing grievances and adjudicating election-related disputes.

#### ***Election Administration and Regulations***

IFES election administration specialist Theo Noel made recommendations to the KPU regarding the proposed structure of its committees, subcommittees, and secretariats. Mr. Noel

also provided analysis of the draft election calendar, and made important contributions to the planning for a polling simulation and the ballot design process. In conjunction with other IFES experts, Mr. Noel provided the KPU with suggestions for the implementing regulations and procedures on polling, counting, and consolidating of the election results.

#### ***National Voter Survey***

By mid-March IFES survey analyst Steve Wagner had completed his analysis of the top line data from the IFES national survey of the Indonesian electorate. His report yielded valuable information for the IFES voter education effort and was disseminated in Jakarta. In Jakarta, Mr. Wagner provided briefings to USAID, United Nations Development Programme, the international donor community, the media, and the NGO community. Planning was underway at the end of the month for Mr. Wagner to brief interested parties in Washington at the beginning of April.

#### ***Voter Education***

The national voter education theme was formulated by IFES voter education specialists Hank Valentino and J.J. Calero, and it was approved by the KPU. After extensive research and discussions with other national and international media experts, they agreed on the following message: ANow your voice really counts! Now your voice really determines the fate of the nation. Use your voting rights!@ In collaboration with the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) in Indonesia, the KPU/IFES voter education campaign will include the dissemination of voter information materials to employees of large companies coordinated by AmCham/Indonesia. For example, one of Indonesia's largest financial institutions, Bank Danamon, has agreed to participate in the voter education effort by hanging posters in its bank branches and printing voter information messages on its customer statements. Plans are also underway for a national media campaign, beginning with the voter registration period.

Mr. Valentino and Mr. Calero are working with the Indonesian Publisher's Association to provide media training for senior editors and management staff. In addition, they are planning for IFES to facilitate the creation of a Joint Operations and Media Center where the KPU will transmit and post the election results.

#### ***Poll Worker Training***

After an initial assessment of the scope of work and prerequisite conditions for delivery of technical assistance, IFES poll worker training specialists Connie Kaplan and Jessica Hunter submitted a proposal for assistance which was approved by the KPU. IFES plan envisions the production of approximately one and a half million poll worker training manuals, and one to two thousand training videos. Pending approval by the KPU, other aspects of the training program include a poll worker newsletter with updates on regulations and training information, and a training-the-trainers project.

The election regulations have been reviewed and analyzed for the drafting of the poll worker training manual and a time line has been drafted for delivery of the necessary commodities.

## **NEPAL**

### ***Impact Summary***

In response to a request for assistance by the Election Commission of Nepal, and a request for proposals coordinated by the U.S. Embassy/Kathmandu and USAID/Washington, IFES initiated a project in March 1999 to provide technical assistance to the Election Commission of Nepal with USG funding. The initial focus of this technical assistance project will be the delivery and installation of a computer server to improve the management of the Election Commission's voter registry of thirteen million people.

### ***Background***

Nepal is in a critical stage of its political development as it struggles to emerge from a long history of authoritarian rule. Currently, public confidence in political parties, government, and democracy in general is at a low level. There are also growing concerns about the quality of elections, stemming in part from allegations surrounding the 1997 local elections in Nepal. As a result, it is now evident that the proper conduct of the upcoming May elections—Nepal's third parliamentary elections--will be vital to public confidence in Nepal's future government and the stability of the new democratic process.

### ***Delivery of the Voter Registration Computer Server***

Part of the effort to support proper conduct of the upcoming elections will be to assist the Election Commission of Nepal in maintaining, processing, and using Nepal's national voter registry. IFES is supporting this effort by aiding in the procurement and installation of an IBM RISC computer. The national registry of thirteen million people is housed on one such computer. The additional equipment will provide necessary back-up in case the commission's primary equipment fails. IFES has been working with the Election Commission of Nepal in identifying the appropriate technology and providing the necessary assistance to fully implement this goal.

## **PAPUA NEW GUINEA**

### ***Impact Summary***

IFES' Pre-Election Technical Assessment (PETA) final report on the Electoral Commission of Papua New Guinea (PNG), with particular focus on the post-conflict electoral situation in the Province of Bougainville, was published and disseminated at the beginning of March 1999. The report was provided to the Electoral Commission of PNG, the U.S. Embassy/Port Moresby, the U.S. State Department, USAID/Washington, the Australian Election Commission (AEC) and the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID). Communication between IFES and the Electoral Commission of PNG as well as the U.S. Embassy/Port Moresby is on-going

in regard to the assistance package. Meanwhile, program activities are in the planning stages and implementation of technical assistance is pending the outcome of several electoral and political developments on Bougainville. IFES election administration specialist Jim Heilman provided briefings on the final report to the U.S. State Department and USAID/Washington as well as the USAID Office of Transitions Initiatives (USAID/OTI) shortly after the release of the report.

#### ***Status of the Electoral Situation in Bougainville***

On the basis of the technical assessment, IFES tentatively planned to send an election administrator to PNG in April or May to help support the Bougainville elections which, presumably, would be called later this year. However, in late March, press reports cited the decision of the Bougainville Interim Government (BIG) and the Bougainville Transitional Government (BTG), with the support of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA), to conduct an election for the BRG between April 24-30. This action by the BIG/BTG/BRA leadership places the electoral process on Bougainville outside the bounds of the PNG national constitution. The Electoral Commission of PNG has no authority to administer such an extra-constitutional election, and, according to press reports from PNG, has declared that such a process would be illegitimate. Pending the actual execution of the election, and the consequent reaction by the PNG Parliament, IFES must remain flexible in its response to the type of assistance requested by the Electoral Commission of PNG.

#### ***Briefings Provided on the PETA Final Report***

Shortly after the distribution of the IFES PETA final report, IFES election administration specialist Jim Heilman met with staff from the U.S. State Department, USAID/Washington, and USAID/OTI to brief them on the highlights and contents of the report. In identifying the areas of necessary technical assistance, Mr. Heilman made important recommendations in regard to election administration training, poll worker training, and voter education assistance. The scope of the IFES assistance package to the Electoral Commission of PNG will be planned in coordination with the AEC and AusAID to avoid duplication of efforts.

## **PHILIPPINES**

#### ***Civic Education Program***

For the first two weeks of March, Project Director Gwenn Hofmann continued to develop a non-formal civic education program which will focus on citizen rights and responsibilities, and how elections and voting effect participation in government programs and decisions. Based on IFES' preliminary research in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), which will hold regional elections in early September, it is evident that there is a need for targeted civic education as the idea of an autonomous region and its relationship with the Philippine Government is

not well understood. The ARMM educational system is outside the purview of the Philippine Department of Education, and the curriculum for civic and government education in the region is not up to national standards. There are several adult education and non-formal education programs in the ARMM region that can be used to deliver civic/voter education to those citizens who would most benefit from the information. IFES is working closely with the Department of Education, Culture, and Sports (DECS), the Philippine Commission on Elections (COMELEC), and Notre Dame University Center for Policy Advocacy and Strategic Studies (NDU/CPASS).

The first draft of the civic education curriculum was presented to DECS, COMELEC, and NDU/CPASS for their review and comments. IFES Project Director Gwenn Hofmann and Field Project Assistant Carmencita Fajardo met with DECS Undersecretary Mariano and two curriculum development specialists to discuss the intent of the curriculum and the five modules it contains. The modules are: 1) Defining Democracy, Civil Society, Politics and Government; 2) Rule of Law; 3) Democracy and Elections, Significance of Citizen Participation; 4) Living in a Civil Society – Becoming an Informed Citizen; and 5) Becoming an Active Citizen Through Elections. Each module is written as an instructional guide for teachers to be used for providing information and shaping positive attitudes toward citizen participation.

The Social Studies Director of DECS was pleased with the curriculum outline and content, and asked if the curriculum could be incorporated into the DECS school program as well. Hofmann explained that DECS could use the materials as needed, provided that the curriculum could be introduced and piloted in the ARMM non-formal education program. DECS representatives will review the curriculum, meet with their working groups, and incorporate Philippine specific materials into it. Hofmann will be returning to Manila in late April to continue working with DECS to finalize the materials, after which DECS will modify the modules into an instructional format and have it translated into the appropriate ARMM dialects. NDU/CPASS will work with the ARMM DECS office to incorporate the training module into the ARMM curriculum as well.

Once finalized, the materials will be used by DECS and IFES in a teacher-training program in the ARMM, to be conducted in May as the new school year in the ARMM begins in June. COMELEC's regional, provincial, and local election officers will act as a resource for the teachers, particularly for the election-related sections of the curriculum. IFES will work with COMELEC to train the election officials in the use of these materials.

#### ***Focus Groups Planned and Conducted***

In early March, three new pieces of ARMM legislation were submitted for consideration to the House of Representatives.

Two bills deal with the expansion of the ARMM region, while the other addresses the issue of the plebiscite election, which is required by the 1996 peace agreement. If passed, the bills would have a significant impact on the 13 September ARMM government election.

In mid-March, IFES Project Director Gwenn Hofmann flew to Davao to meet with USAID/OTI Regional Manager Paul Randolph and NDU/CPASS Director Edgar Ramirez to finalize the NDU/CPASS focus group study of problems and concerns surrounding the electoral process in the ARMM region.

Mr. Ramirez discussed each of the bills and explained that they had been read by the House Election Committee, but had been set aside until after the Easter Recess. The proposed legislation most likely will be discussed prior to the ARMM election in September, but not acted on until after the election takes place. Nevertheless, the expansion of the ARMM and the plebiscite will be political issues during the ARMM election cycle, and therefore IFES, USAID/OTI, and NDU/CPASS determined that the focus groups would address the pending legislation.

Eight focus groups were conducted between 22-26 March 1999, and an overview report of the data will be given to IFES in early April. Based on the results of the focus group findings, IFES and COMELEC will develop a more targeted voter registration and election information campaign. They will also use the information as a resource for Congress as it considers the additional ARMM-related legislation.

#### ***Voter Registration Information Campaign***

Based on new legislation, COMELEC will hold re-registration in the ARMM on 8-9 May 1999. All eligible citizens must re-register in order to vote in the upcoming September election. In addition, based on IFES' recommendations, COMELEC is currently mapping all precincts in the ARMM in order to maximize the accuracy of the voter rolls by identifying and properly placing voters in their correct voting area.

Hofmann worked with IFES Media Consultant Hank Valentino to prepare a public information campaign for this upcoming re-registration. It was determined that the voter information campaign would have to be pervasive in order to reach voters in areas where television and radio are less effective outreach tools. To this end, Valentino developed a series of nine radio spots and a comic-strip style poster that explains the registration process. Furthermore, J. J. Calero of J. Walter Thompson is assisting COMELEC and IFES on a *pro bono* basis with the development of the poster storyboards. Calero met with the Broadcasters Association to verify that COMELEC would be given some public service time on the ARMM radio stations in addition to the airtime that COMELEC would be purchasing. COMELEC and IFES

will work with the Philippine Information Agency (PIA) to produce and air the spots.

Gwenn Hofmann is also developing training materials for COMELEC's Election Officers (EOs) to be used in their training of voter registration personnel. EO training will incorporate additional skills on serving as a public information resource for the community at large. EOs will be asked to monitor local radio stations for the information spots, place posters in public spaces, and attend meetings to discuss the registration process. IFES will conduct this training through COMELEC in late April.

#### ***Impact Summary***

With funding made possible by the USAID Office for Transition Initiatives, IFES forged ahead with preparations for the upcoming September regional elections in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao. IFES is working across the spectrum of assistance needs with plans for voter registration procedural training and an information campaign, training of election officials for election day procedures, a focus group analysis of pending legislation, and a civic education curriculum in the ARMM with applicability to the rest of the Philippines. IFES continues to collaborate closely with the Philippine Commission on Elections to ensure that the elections in the ARMM are conducted through an open and transparent process, with an informed electorate and active citizenry.