

The November elections in **Georgia** marked a significant step forward on the path to democracy despite concerns about harassment of the opposition and other, more technical problems with the vote tally. Constitutional reform and the openness of the media during the elections were significant accomplishments.

In **Armenia**, while the first multiparty elections in July were technically sound, the suspension of one of the main opposition parties, problems with party and candidate registration and the lack of a truly independent electoral commission marred the vote. The joint UN/OSCE monitoring operation, which included a Canadian, concluded that, largely as a result of the pre-election conditions, the vote, while generally free, was not fair.

The first parliamentary elections since independence were held in **Belarus** in May, in conjunction with a national referendum on, inter alia, economic integration with Russia and the President's powers of parliamentary dissolution. Observers were critical of the conduct of the election and the referendum, noting the "inappropriate involvement" of the executive branch in the electoral process, restrictions on opposition party activities and government control and influence on the media. They concluded that the elections did not meet international standards for a free and fair vote.

In **Azerbaijan**, an attempted coup in July resulted in a crackdown on the opposition in the run-up to the November elections, with major opposition parties only allowed to register after considerable international pressure. Marred by the exclusion of up to 60% of the candidates and one-third of the parties, uneven media access, "serious irregularities" in the voting and vote count and widespread multiple voting, international observers, including the joint UN/OSCE operation, concluded that they had "serious doubts" about the fairness of the vote.

Elsewhere in the **Central Asian Republics** of the FSU, a referendum in 1994 extending the term of office of the President of **Turkmenistan** until 1999, turned into a regional trend in 1995. In **Uzbekistan**, a reported 99.96 % of the electorate voted in March to extend President **Karimov's** term in office until 2000 and in **Kazakhstan** President **Nazarbaev** saw his term extended by referendum to 1999 with a reported 95% of the votes cast.

While Western Europe's democratic traditions are firmly entrenched, significant reforms were implemented in a number of countries. In **Belgium**, the May elections involved the first direct elections for three regional legislatures (Flemish, Walloon and Brussels) as well as the German-speaking Community Council, in keeping with constitutional reforms
