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## DEMOCRACY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

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### **Ukrainian Parliamentary Elections Were Democratic; Problems Observed in Local Elections**

**Kyiv, April 7, 2006** – According to observers affiliated with the all-Ukrainian civic organization, the Democracy Development Foundation (DDF), the elections of 2006 in Ukraine were conducted in accordance with Ukrainian legislation and generally adhered to internationally recognized standards for fair elections. Violations reported and found during this election year were not substantial and did not impede the free expression of the will of the citizens of Ukraine.

The Democracy Development Foundation organized a team of 139 short term observers from 10 countries which include: Moldova, Czech Republic, Uzbekistan, Canada, Japan, Greece, Switzerland, Germany, the United Kingdom and the USA. Observers were deployed to every oblast in Ukraine, and conducted pre-election meetings with various parties, members of the local media and election commissions, along with observing both the parliamentary and local elections on March 26.

Observers noted that quality of the administrative process of the parliamentary election in this year has improved from previous elections in Ukraine, however, there exists a noticeable difference between election campaigns and election administration between parliamentary and local elections, with the latter having more potential for thwarting the will of the voters. The biggest problems observed at the local level in the various raion and oblast elections were the invalidation of elections based on questionable grounds and the delaying of ballot tabulation results long after counting had ceased and protocols had been signed.

#### **I. Conclusions and Recommendations**

Despite the positive changes which took place due to the positive work of the Central Election Commission of Ukraine and the commissions at the lower levels, many campaigns took place under tense local atmospheres. Representatives of the state power bodies, the bodies of local self government, parties & blocs (subjects of the electoral process), as well as the district election commissions, tried to do their best in order to fulfill their duties as they related to the maintenance and distribution of materials, technical provisions and the forming of precinct election commissions. Although there were few instances where it was outcome determinative, too many voters nationwide nonetheless were unable to exercise their right to vote because of inaccuracies and mistakes in voter lists. There were also many instances of directors of large enterprises and organizations of different types using the resources of their businesses and state entities to force their subordinates to participate in the election campaigns of favored political forces, particularly in local elections.

Holding local, regional and national elections on the same day in Ukraine also significantly complicated the work of commission members. Due to the significant amount of information on election ballots and the number of ballots (from 4-6), there were long lines during the election at polling stations. This often interfered with ballot secrecy. The small size of polling sites and the

small number of voting booths also led many voters to mark their ballots outside of the voting booths which created the possibility of their secrecy being compromised. Separating parliamentary and local elections in the future would solve many of these technical problems.

The duration of vote count caused special concern among many observers who were unable to be present for the tabulation of the local election results. Observers from all 25 oblasts reported that the tabulation process was far too complicated and long, adding to the ability of those who might have wanted to participate in illegal activities during the tabulation and completion of protocols, especially at the local level where votes were often counted last. DDF continues to monitor the situation in Khmelnytsky, Simferopol and several other cities where the elections were invalidated. Despite these problems, most election workers appeared to be knowledgeable of the law and trying their best to administer the elections under extremely difficult circumstances.

## **II. About the Democracy Development Foundation**

The Democracy Development Foundation is a fully registered Ukrainian nongovernmental organization dedicated to promoting democratic development in Ukraine and the former Soviet Union.

DDF has a broad and substantial involvement in the promotion of free and fair elections in Ukraine. In 2004, DDF implemented a program of monitoring the presidential elections in Ukraine, including observation of meetings of election commissions in all 25 oblasts. During the period of that observation which culminated in the events of the “Orange Revolution”, DDF experts found and reported more than 10,000 violations of election legislation. Closer analysis of the electoral fraud revealed regional trends which DDF documented. This analysis was the basis of the publication of a book which prepared practical recommendations for the prevention of possible future violations of during the 2006 parliamentary elections in Ukraine.

From January through March 2006, the Democracy Development Foundation organized trainings for nearly 1,800 local observers spanning 33 political parties, in Zhytomyr, Mykolaiv, Poltava, Kharkiv and Crimea, through a sub-grant from the International Republican Institute.

For more information about the Democracy Development Foundation or for copies of DDF sponsored publications, including regional election reports from 2004 and 2006 elections in Ukraine, please contact Oksana Holovach at [ddf\\_ngo@yahoo.com](mailto:ddf_ngo@yahoo.com).