I R I
Advancing Democracy Worldwide

Republic of Macedonia
Parliamentary Election
September 15, 2002

Election Observation Mission
Report and Recommendations

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I. Executive Summary

The 15 September, 2002 parliamentary election was the third since Macedonia's independence in 1991. The election demonstrated that the country has turned an important corner on the road to stability. Overcoming the consequences of an ethnic Albanian insurgency in 2001 and undergoing difficulties implementing the Ohrid Framework Agreement, the country was bitterly divided along ethnic and political lines. The parliament was fragmented, with the eight parties that entered it in 1998 increasing to sixteen by the end of the mandate due to defections of MPs and splintering of parties. In 2001, Macedonia saw three governments, including the 'wide coalition' or 'unity government,' formed in the midst of the armed conflict to unite the country's diverse political factions in dealing with the insurgency. The international community regarded the September 2002 parliamentary election as a test to Macedonia's democratic maturity.

IRI observers concluded that the election was conducted largely in accordance with the international standards for democratic elections. For the second time in successive parliamentary elections, power was transferred democratically from government to opposition.

IRI received funding from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to conduct three pre-election monitoring missions and an international election observation mission for the September 15, 2002 parliamentary elections in Macedonia. IRI's pre-election observation teams and the 30-member election observation delegation included representatives from the United States, Great Britain, Austria, the Netherlands and Slovakia. The Macedonian State Election Commission credentialed the election day observers, who operated independently of OSCE/ODIHR and other observer missions and issued their own preliminary post-election statement on September 16, 2002.

IRI's pre-election monitoring missions had the following goals:
- An evaluation of the general pre-election environment.
- An examination of the preparation of the political parties for the elections and their performance during the election campaign and evaluation of their contribution to establishing conditions for an open and credible electoral process.

IRI's election observation mission had the following goals:
- To support a larger international effort to assist in maintaining an open and fully-participatory democratic electoral process in Macedonia;
- To evaluate the administration of the elections;
- To recommend ways in which the electoral process could be improved for future elections.

Beginning in June, IRI conducted three missions designed to evaluate parties' contributions to an open and credible electoral process and to make recommendations to party leaders about how to improve the process within their organizations. Each observer delegation consisted of five observers who deployed separately throughout the country to interview local party activists,

NGO's, and the media about the electoral environment to date. By the time IRI's 30-member election day observation team arrived in Macedonia to observe the September 15 elections, IRI had already conducted more than 180 meetings with activists in 30 cities and towns across the country**.**

IRI election day observers arrived in Skopje, Macedonia on September 11, 2002. Following two days of briefings in Skopje on September 12 and 13 with political parties' representatives, election officials and representatives of the American Embassy, the teams were deployed to six electoral districts across the country. On September 13 and 14, delegates met with local party officials, election administrators, media representatives and representatives from the Macedonian domestic election monitoring coalition MOST. The election observation started on September 14 with visits to polling sites in military units and prisons. IRI also observed the process of mobile voting in hospitals and private homes. On election day, September 15, delegates traveled throughout their assigned electoral units and observed the opening of polling stations, voting procedures, ballot tabulation and reporting processes. IRI observers visited approximately 300 polling stations or approximately 10% of the total number of polling stations in the country. The day following the elections, the delegates returned to Skopje for debriefing and issued a preliminary statement to the news media (Appendix III).

IRI observers noted few problems on the eve of election and on election day itself, and they were able to conclude unanimously that the election process was sound. They found no evidence of widespread or systematic irregularity in the balloting process in the six electoral units within Macedonia. Based upon their observations and their many interviews with representatives of parties, civic organizations, election administrators and the media, IRI observers concluded that the results of the balloting were a credible and accurate reflection of the will of the citizens of Macedonia on election day.

This report contains the conclusions and recommendations based on the pre-election monitoring missions and election day observation mission. IRI will distribute this report to Macedonian election authorities, government officials, and political parties as well as US government officials, Members of the United States Congress, and media representatives in both the U.S. and Macedonia.

The IRI observers characterize the 2002 parliamentary elections in Macedonia as an outstanding improvement in the process and implementation of a democratically based electoral system compared to previous elections held in the country. Observers found that the State Electoral Commission fulfilled its obligation to ensure that the process was well organized and that local electoral officials and general public were well informed about the voting process. Most local election officials were conscientious, well trained, and committed to a fair and honest process. The organization of the polling sites was exemplary and, with few isolated exceptions, order was maintained. The high voter turnout (73.4%) was a sign of widespread trust in the legitimacy of the election. There is no reason to believe that the final results reflect anything but the will of the voters of Macedonia.

IRI delegates believe that the largest contributing factor to the success of these elections was the new election law, which introduced a multi-district proportional electoral system.   The new division of the electoral districts and the elimination of the second round of voting made the voting process simpler, clearer and calmer. The provisions of the law that allowed both opposition and governing parties to participate at every level of the election process played an extremely important role for the credibility of the electoral process. These measures increased confidence in the entire electoral process and improved transparency.

The substantial domestic and international monitoring effort played an important part in ensuring the fair and largely uncontested outcome of the election. The large international observation mission before and on election day, with the participation of more than 850 OSCE observers, more than 150 U.S. Embassy observers, observers from the European Union, and smaller missions such as the one organized by IRI, contributed immensely to ensuring that the September 15 elections met international democratic standards.

There were some problems with the election process that should be addressed in the future. However, it should be stressed that these problems were not severe enough to undermine the legitimacy of the election results.

The IRI observers noted the following problems:

- Group and proxy voting continue present a breach of voting procedures.
- Citizens of Macedonia living in foreign countries are still not able to vote without returning to Macedonia.
- The law needs to adopt a more transparent mechanism of addressing complaints and contesting the elections.
- The law contains vague provisions relating to the role of security forces during elections.
- The election law over-relies on the judiciary and law graduates for membership of election commissions and requires political approval of judges' appointments to the electoral bodies.
- The election law rules that the appointees to the Regional Election Commissions, the Municipal Election Commissions and the Electoral Boards shall be proposed by the major ruling party and the major opposition party and excludes smaller parties and citizens' groups from participation in the electoral bodies.
- The official campaign period was rather short – 30 days.

While the election process in Macedonia in 2002 was a vast improvement over the previous rounds of presidential and local elections, there is still a need for greater attention to all aspects of building a strong democracy: an independent judiciary, better checks and balances, and more objective media outlets.   These are essential for Macedonia's continued development, and the country's further integration into Euro-Atlantic structures.

II.   IRI Programs in Macedonia

IRI has been active in Macedonia since 1990, becoming one of the first international NGOs to initiate political programs in the country. Since that time, IRI has worked in such areas as election law and voting practices, political party development and governance assistance. IRI is perhaps best known in Macedonia, and in the region as a whole, for its work with political parties on public opinion research and analysis: successfully encouraging the parties to utilize opinion research as an integral part of their overall campaign and voter-outreach efforts. IRI is currently engaged in three program areas with USAID support including communication training for the government of Macedonia, party building work for the major political parties in the country, and assistance to Macedonia's youth in becoming actively engaged in the political process.

IRI began helping Macedonians develop their electoral system and processes in 1990. In 1990 and in 1994, IRI sponsored delegations to observe parliamentary elections. Both missions resulted in positive, concrete changes in Macedonian election law.

IRI expanded its objectives in 1993 and 1994 when it initiated work with local political party organizations. IRI training emphasized party organization-building, membership recruitment, grass roots coalition-building and direct voter contact. Following the 1994 parliamentary election, IRI initiated a parliamentary assistance program that emphasized institutional development such as building professional staffs and strengthening committee systems as well as training for new MPs in the "nuts and bolts" of effective constituent services.

As the 1998 parliamentary elections approached, IRI saw an opportunity to work with Macedonia's national party organizations on platform development and political communication. In particular, IRI sought to teach parties the fundamentals of conducting public opinion research and of using the results of that research to build more broad-based, policy-oriented platforms. A major objective was to help the parties expand the substance of their political programs and campaigns beyond the narrow range of ethnic and nationalist issues that had characterized them previously.

The results of the program exceeded IRI's expectations. The polls demonstrated that for a large majority of Macedonian citizens, bread-and-butter issues related to employment, education and health care were of equal or greater importance than the polarizing issues related to ethnicity and nationalism that had dominated previous campaigns. The parties responded to this information quickly and concretely.   More than any previous campaign, the 1998 parliamentary contest engendered debate on a broad range of policy issues. The change in emphasis was perhaps most dramatic with respect to the campaign of the VMRO-DPMNE, which significantly softened its nationalist appeal and put more emphasis on how it would address the country's critical social and economic problems, if elected. VMRO-DPMNE, which boycotted the 1994 parliamentary election, won a plurality of the vote in the 1998 election and formed Macedonia's first truly post-communist government. The less polarizing tenor of the campaign made possible the announcement following the election that VMRO-DPMNE would invite the Democratic Party of

Albanians to participate in the new government. In these respects, the 1998 campaign and its aftermath represented a significant step forward for Macedonian democracy.

The war in Kosovo in 1999 created a crisis that sorely tested the government's commitment to reform and a constructive approach in resolving inter-ethnic conflicts. In this environment, IRI shifted its program focus to address the critical need on the part of the government for training in political outreach, communications and coalition maintenance in the midst of a crisis created by the influx of hundreds of thousands of refugees from Kosovo.

The outbreak of fighting between ethnic Albanian insurgency groups and the Macedonian armed forces in early 2001 put the security of the entire region at risk. Faced with the gravest threat to the existence of the country in the years since Macedonia's independence, and having been caught by surprise, the Macedonian government was ill-prepared to meet the challenge of the insurrection. Meanwhile, tensions among average citizens ran high and daily life, even in those areas not touched by violence, was marked by palpable fear of the outbreak of war.

In an effort to maximize the relevance of its program during the period of crisis, IRI conducted an intensive opinion research study aimed at shedding new light on the sources of inter-ethnic tension in Macedonia, and on possible new ways to pursue solutions to old problems. With emergency funding from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), IRI conducted 12 focus groups with ethnic Albanian and Macedonian participants in six different regions of the country. IRI incorporated the findings of the research into its communications training projects for national and local political and civic leaders, while also looking for opportunities to make the information relevant to the national political leaders, who were engaged in ongoing efforts to defuse the insurgency.

In the summer of 2001, IRI started a new two-year program funded by USAID, which involves governance assistance, political party work and youth outreach programming. The program provides public communications assistance for the spokespersons and public affairs offices of the government, the President's office, and the various ministries, to encourage greater openness and transparency. In addition, the program enhances the ability of the country's elected leadership to communicate with the public regarding their successes and plans for facing the challenges ahead.

Before the parliamentary elections in September 2002, IRI worked intensively with the political parties in the areas of message development and two-way internal and external communications at the national and local levels, enhancing the parties' ability to communicate with and be responsive to the voters. Following the elections, IRI plans to conduct a review of the parties' performance during the elections and intends to work with the parties in longer-term party-building areas, such as platform development, leadership development and candidate selection. These efforts will be aimed at encouraging the adoption of new organizational structures, internal decision making procedures and outreach methods that will ensure that the parties' nets are cast as broadly as possible for new ideas and new talent.

IRI is also assisting Macedonia's youth in becoming actively and visibly engaged in the political

and civic life of the country. IRI is organizing a task force of Macedonian political and civic youth organizations from across ethnic, political and regional lines to serve as a model for organizing diverse groups around issues of common concern.

Along with the election observation mission on September 15, 2002, IRI conducted an exit poll, which served as a check on officially reported election results as well as a benchmark measure of the new government's mandate.

III.   Election Framework

The National Assembly consists of 120 representatives. For the 2002 parliamentary election, three new election laws were enacted: the Law on Election of Members of Parliament of 2002, which came into effect in July 2002; the Law on the Voter List; and the Law on Election Districts.

Representation in Parliament

On September 15, the citizens of Macedonia went to the polls to elect new members to the parliament. It was the fourth time that Macedonians voted in nationwide elections since Macedonia's first multi-party elections in 1990. The outgoing parliament was dissolved on July 17, 2002 in accordance with Macedonian parliamentary election law requiring that elections be held within 60 days of the dissolving of parliament. Therefore, the elections were required to be held by September 15, 2002.

Article #2 of the Law on Election of Members of Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia (published on June 25, 2002) says that 120 members of parliament shall be elected according to the proportional model and the territory of the country shall be divided into six election districts, each of which will elect 20 members of parliament.

All elections since 1990, including the parliamentary elections of 1990 and 1994, were conducted in accordance with the old election law of the Yugoslav Socialist Republic of Macedonia. This law had numerous shortcomings that were detailed in IRI's observation reports from those earlier parliamentary elections. In 1998, a new election law was passed that substantially improved the entire election process and increased confidence in the election results.

The primary mechanism for establishing greater confidence in the election process was the inclusion of opposition representatives at all levels of election administration, a process that started in 1998. Another confidence building factor, introduced in 1998, was allowing domestic election observers from the parties. With both governing and opposition parties working at the national, district and local levels, all parties could be confident that any violations of the election law would be witnessed and reported. Although political parties' representatives and domestic observers did report on a number of violations in the presidential elections in 1999 and the local elections in 2000, many complaints went unanswered by the authorities and the justice system.

Following 1998 parliamentary elections, there were 120 seats in the parliament. Representatives for 35 of these seats were chosen on the basis of a nationwide, proportional ballot while an additional 85 seats were filled on the basis of a majority vote in electoral districts established for the elections. The law provided for a second voting round in the electoral districts where none of the candidates received 50 percent plus one vote. Macedonian citizens and government officials as well as international observers noticed that most instances of electoral violence used to occur

between the two rounds of voting. For this reason, the government started working in 2001 on introducing an electoral system that would provide for only one voting round.

Election Law

The new Parliamentary Election Law of July 2002 introduced substantial changes and significantly improved the previous legislation. The new method of election of parliamentarians based on multi-district proportional representation has several advantages:

- Simplifying the election system by introducing a single method of proportional representation rather than a mixed method of single-mandate districts and national proportional representation;
- Eliminating second-round elections, which had previously encouraged more targeted fraud and intimidation;
- Using security spray and a ultra-violet lamp limited potential attempts for electoral fraud.

The methodology of the parliamentary elections 2002 was a significant part of the Ohrid Framework Agreement signed on August 13, 2002. The four signatory parties to the agreement[i] settled on a new multi-district proportional representation model and on the necessary redrawing of the electoral districts. The actual electoral districts for parliamentary elections are established under special legislation.

To administer the election, a four-tiered structure of electoral bodies was established: a State Election Commission, six Regional Election Commissions, 34 Municipal Election Commissions, and 2,973 precinct Election Boards.

Subsequently, the State Election Commission (SEC) issued additional regulations and reached an agreement with the Ministry of Internal Affairs with respect to the deployment of police at the polling stations on election day. The State Election Commission issued further instructions identifying which persons are allowed to be present at the polling stations during voting and the counting of the ballots.

Selection of the Election Date

The Ohrid Framework Agreement, which ended an ethnic Albanian insurgency in 2001, called for early elections that were supposed to take place shortly after the previous parliament adopted the constitutional changes outlined in the document.

One of the original conditions of the formation of a wide coalition "national unity" government at the height of the insurgency was that parliamentary elections (due under normal circumstances

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[i] These are the two major ethnic Macedonian-based parties, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) and the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM), and two ethnic Albanian-based parties, the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA) and the Party of Democratic Prosperity (PDP).

in October or November of 2002) would be scheduled for late January 2002. This condition later was codified in the Framework Agreement. Additionally, independent of the Framework Agreement, the Ministry of Justice had been engaged in drafting a new Law on Election of Members of Parliament, which sought to address some of the problems that arose in previous elections.   The new law involved drastic changes, including changing the system of representation from the current 85:35 split of majoritarian and proportional seats to a multi-district proportional system. It quickly became evident that early elections would not be feasible for lack of time to adopt the necessary legislation. In addition, the ethnic Albanian parties made clear that they would not support elections until the remaining provisions of the Framework Agreement were passed in Parliament.

After considerable debate, the four signatories of the Ohrid Agreement agreed to a September 15 election date. After extensive negotiations, the parliament passed a package of 16 laws to meet various obligations written in the Ohrid Agreement. In July, Speaker of Parliament Andov officially set the election date for September 15.

III.   Election Administration

The election was administered by a four-tiered administrative structure. The structure was comprised of the State Election Commission (SEC), six Regional Election Commissions (REC), 34 Municipal Election Commissions (MEC), and 2,973 precinct Election Boards (EB).

The President of the State Election Commission and her deputy were appointed by the President of the Republic of Macedonia. The members of the SEC and their deputies, as well as the Secretary, were appointed by the parliament. The election law requires that two members of the SEC be appointed from among the judges of the Supreme Court, while their deputies should be attorneys. Each of the major ruling party and the major opposition party proposed two members of the SEC.

The State Election Comission appointed the presidents of the Regional Election Comissions and the Municipal Election Comissions by two-thirds majority votes of SEC members. The members of these commissions were proposed by the ruling parties and the parties in opposition in equal proportion, while in each commission one member was appointed from among the judges of the Primary Courts.

Polling Station Electoral Boards (individual polling stations) were composed of a president, four members and their deputies. The president was required to be a law graduate. This condition was not always fulfilled for lack of enough persons with a law degree, especially in small villages. The ruling party, which won the largest numbers of votes during the 1998 election, selected two members of each Electoral Board, and the largest opposition party also proposed two members. The provisions of the election law ensured that VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM divided all positions on the Electoral Boards. In the mostly Albanian populated areas, DPA and

PDP filled the positions on the Electoral Boards. This provision made impossible for smaller parties and citizens' groups to take part in election administration.

Eligibility to Vote/Voter Registration

One of the most contentious issues in previous elections involved the voter registration lists. All Macedonian citizens over the age of 18 were eligible to vote in the election. Under the new Law on the Voter List, the Ministry of Justice is responsible for registering voters. Voters' names are automatically added to voter registration lists upon their 18th birthday; addresses and other changes are automatically updated following a change in the voter's national identification card, and voters' names are automatically removed upon death. While voters' cards were eliminated in the new election law, all eligible voters were responsible themselves for checking their names on the voter lists.

The Ministry of Justice made the list available to the citizens in the second half of July. Within fifteen days of publishing the voter lists, all eligible voters who did not find their names were supposed to file a request to be included in the voter lists in the electoral districts where they resided. Through a voter education campaign, the Macedonian NGO coalition MOST raised public attention and urged citizens to verify their recorded residence and request any necessary corrections on time. Although 80,000 voters requested corrections, the general opinion was that more time was needed for the voters to check the list and file for correction.

The new election law adopted on July 3, 2002 allows for members of Macedonia's armed services and merchant marine to vote on the day before the official election date at officially designated locations. In addition, voters serving prison terms were allowed to vote in polling places at prison sites on September 14. Disabled people or seriously ill persons were also allowed to vote using mobile ballot boxes on the day before the official election.

In August, the Ministry of Interior issued passports to 3,200 ethnic Macedonians living abroad whose names were included in the voter lists. These persons' residences were registered at the Ministry of Interior headquarters in Skopje. The Minister of Justice subsequently ordered the removal of these persons' names from the Voter List.

There were missing names and incorrect addresses in virtually all voter registration lists, but their number was not significant enough relatively insignificant to affect the outcome of the election. The total number of registered voters was 1,664,296.

Candidate Lists

All registered political parties had the right to propose party lists for each of the six electoral units. Each list contained 20 names of candidates, since each electoral district elected 20 members of parliament. The lists were presented to the RECs on time - more than 40 days prior to election day.

Individual voters could also propose their own, independent candidate lists to the RECs. To be valid, these lists had to be accompanied by 500 validated signatures. A total of 38 parties, party coalitions and independent candidate lists were accepted by the RECs for the election. The State Electoral Commission published the candidate lists on August 16, 2002.

The election law stated that in the candidates' lists each gender should be presented by at least 30%. The RECs determined the order of the candidate lists on the ballot by lot, thus the order of the candidate lists was different for each electoral district.

Advance Voting

The law allows the military personnel on duty, prisoners and internally displaced person to cast their ballots at their current location one day before the official election. The SEC was requested to provide for voting for 862 persons in prison at ten correctional facilities; around 8,000 military personnel at 93 military bases, and 4,351 internally displaced persons in different municipalities. This provision presented a serious challenge to the SEC, because of its decision to print as many ballots as there were registered voters. While such an approach limited the potential for electoral fraud, it also limited the SECs flexibility in distributing the ballots to the locations for advance voting. For example, the General Staff had to submit the names of the military personnel expected to be on duty on election day to SEC by July. As a result of relocations of personnel in the months before elections, many soldiers and officers could not find their names on the voter lists and were not able to vote on September 14.

The provision for mobile voting for disabled or ill persons was employed only for persons who submitted an application well in advance. The OSCE noted that due to SEC limitations and a practice of discouraging applications for mobile voting, the access to the polls for handicapped and ill persons had been unduly restricted.

Filing and Adjudication of Complaints

The Primary Court handles complaints brought forth by the candidates regarding violations of their rights during the campaign. If a candidate brings a complaint to the Court believing that his or her rights have been violated in some form, the Court had to decide within 72 hours if there was a need for rights protection. A complaint could be presented to the Court of Appeals in case of an unsatisfactory decision by the Primary Court. The Court of Appeals had to make its decision within 72 hours of receiving the complaint.

If there was a complaint regarding a decision by the State Election Commission to annul or repeat the voting, it could be presented to the Supreme Court of the Republic of Macedonia through the SEC within 24 hours. The Supreme Court was required to act upon the compliant within 48 hours of its submission.

In cases of complaints regarding voters' rights, a citizen could submit a complaint to the Regional Election Commission within 48 hours of any violation. The REC had to reach a

decision within 48 hours of submission of the complaint. A complaint against the REC could be submitted to the Court of Appeals within 48 hours after the decision had been passed down by the Election Commission.

The Supreme Court of the Republic of Macedonia and the Courts of Appeals had to rule on complaints in a council of five judges selected by lot. The Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals were required to reach a decision within 48 hours after the initial submission.

Campaign Financing

An organizer of an election campaign was allowed to open a bank account with the reference "for election campaign" up until 35 days before election day. Opening of a bank account had to be based on a certificate issued by the State Election Commission for the submitted list of candidates. The organizer was obliged to deposit all of the funds and donations intended to finance the campaign into this bank account. The funds in these bank accounts were the only resource that could be used to cover campaign expenses.

Organizers are requested to submit a financial report on the election campaign that is due to the Parliament three months after the election. The report must contain information on the total amount of the donations and expenses incurred. Any excess funds that remain after the end of the elections are to be donated to charity by the election campaign organizer.

The election law specified that election campaigns could not be financed by the Budget of the Republic of Macedonia, except for the funds designated in article 64 for reimbursement of elected members of parliament. The budgets of the municipalities and the city of Skopje could not provide funds for election campaigns. The law stipulates that funds may not be used from public enterprises, institutions, citizens' associations, religious communities or groups, foundations, foreign governments, international institutions, or organizations of foreign states or other foreigners, nor can funds be acquired from enterprises with "mixed capital" from foreign investors.

Moreover, the law said that the campaign organizer may not spend more than 15 denars ($0.25) per registered voter in the electoral district in which the candidate was running. The SEC may annul the election if it discovered that illegal funds were used to finance the election campaign.

Access to the Media

The media in Macedonia was required to give equal coverage and access to programs to all candidates, political parties, and groups of voters. There were special rules regarding equal media presentation, which determined the distribution of airtime and advertising. The rule of equal presentation was set up by the Parliament upon request of the Broadcasting Council. The Council submitted the proposal to the Parliament 60 days prior to the election. The decision was published 40 days before election day.

The media was required to state that campaign advertisements were paid for when they appear in the "information" part of programs. There were considerable fines envisioned for media outlets, which violated regulations stated in the election law.

The election campaign was characterized by numerous violations of the freedom of the press that included attacks on the offices of the opposition daily *Global,* telephone threats to the editor for publishing an article about the police special forces, the "Lions," and bombing the car of the managing editor. The Ministry of Interior later issued a statement threatening to press charges against publishers who "damage the reputation of the current government."

Throughout the campaign, the media remained highly politicized and virtually divided along political and ethnic lines. While *Nova Makedonia* was pro-government oriented, *Utrinski Vestnik* published critical stories about the government and *Dnevnik* provided a fair coverage of VMRO-DPMNE (31%) and "Together for Macedonia" (28%) according to the OSCE. The Albanian language newspapers focused on the four Albanian parties.

The OSCE noted that the public Macedonian Television failed to provide balanced coverage of the campaign, granting 56% of the news programs broadcast to the government and the ruling party and only 12% to the opposition. The private *Sitel TV* favored the Socialist Party of Macedonia, and the private TV station *A 1* was more critical of the government. National and local broadcast media violated the rules of the Broadcast Council and several complaints were filed.

IRI delegates were informed that most local Centers for Press, Radio and Television gave equal time free to all parties and they could purchase additional time for commercials. The Centers also hosted local roundtables focused on various issues. In Prilep, one of the roundtables focused on women. Some private media outlets sold commercial time preferentially to preffered political parties. During the election campaign parties complained about the lack of objectivity in the media and the absence of journalistic standards or a legal framework to prevent libel and slander.

In addition, some local media were closed down during the election campaign, because governmental agencies cut services to their operations or their licenses were put on hold. Although the agencies officially explained that they cut services to some radio and TV stations for unpaid bills, the media outlets considered it an attempt by the government to silence them during the election campaign.

Recognition of Domestic Election Observers

The new election law provided for the accreditation of domestic and foreign election observers by the SEC. The organizations allowed to conduct election observation had to be registered domestic and foreign associations of citizens of the Republic of Macedonia and registered associations of foreign countries, which responded to the principles of democracy and the

protection of human rights. International organizations and representatives of foreign countries were also allowed to observe the elections. The State Election Commission determined the procedure for conducting election observations. The registration of observers concluded 10 days before the election. If the observers supported any party, the State Election Commission had the right to revoke the authorization to observe elections. There were no cases of revoked authorization.

There were approximately 3,000 polling stations in Macedonia. It is estimated that the domestic monitoring organization MOST deployed observers to more than half of these sites. More than eight hundred observers comprised the OSCE team and the U.S. Embassy deployed 150 observers.   Along with the legal provisions allowing for the major political parties' representation on election commissions at all levels, and for all candidate parties to deploy poll watchers in every polling station, the provisions on accreditation of domestic and international monitors represented critical contributions to the success of the election.

IV.   Findings of IRI Election Observers and Pre-Election Monitors

A. Election Environment Observation Missions

IRI's Electoral Environment Observation Missions reports are attached as Appendix II. In an effort to contribute to free and fair elections in the Republic of Macedonia, the International Republican Institute conducted three observation missions leading up to the parliamentary elections in September. These election environment observation missions were in response to requests from parties to be engaged in the electoral and political processes well before polls opened in September. The reports produced by IRI were meant to assist the political parties and their leaders in efforts to conduct credible and democratic elections.

Mission One

From June 9 through 15, the first election environment monitoring mission was held in the Republic of Macedonia.   Five teams, composed of experts from Europe and the United States, deployed throughout the country. Each team had meetings with local and national political party leaders, representatives of the media and NGOs. IRI teams met with representatives from all major parliamentary parties (governing and opposition) in all six electoral units. IRI observers visited cities, small towns and villages in twenty different municipalities. A total of 57 meetings were held with 107 local and national leaders.

IRI observers found the pre-election environment in Macedonia tense and the political parties were extremely concerned about their ability to campaign freely and fairly. Their concerns were focused on a few key areas: violence, intimidation, the media and campaign financing. While very few campaign-related activities had begun at the time, parties had started the process of becoming organized for the election. However, trust in the electoral system, in political parties, in the judicial system and in the government was very low. There was little confidence among

the governing parties, the opposition, or the public that the upcoming election could be conducted within international democratic standards. Governing parties believed that the opposition would steal the election through manipulations of voter cards, electoral lists or the media or the use of violence. Opposition parties believed that ruling parties would steal the elections through violence, intimidation, bribes, the misuse of state-run media or through direct election fraud. The opposition parties were preparing for civil disobedience in case of serious election fraud. While there were few credible allegations of actual misconduct in the pre-election period, the high levels of anxiety and the widespread lack of trust in any institution or organization meant that the campaign in general, and election day in particular, would be seen as de-stabilizing events and fraught with physical and political dangers. Instead of describing the election as a positive opportunity to voice opinions about who should lead the country, voters and political leaders expressed fear of election day and what it meant for them, for their parties and for the country.

Because of the proliferation of weapons and the presence of armed groups in all areas of the Republic of Macedonia, political parties feared the use of violence for political purposes. Both opposition and governing parties (as well as journalists and NGO leaders) felt that the potential for violence was a major threat to a free and fair election. Since voters did not trust the electoral process and feared that their vote would not remain secret, IRI concluded that illegal enticement or intimidation could have an effect on the outcome of the vote.

Most party activists were deeply concerned about the lack of control over campaign and party financing. There were many allegations by both governing and opposition parties of improper donations to political parties.

Because of these tensions, there was virtual unanimity among party and community leaders that the international community had a constructive role to play in the September elections.

IRI recommended to Macedonia's political leaders that they make every effort to ensure discipline among their activists and supporters. With a relatively unhealthy pre-election environment and rampant cynicism, political leaders had the obligation stay focused on the goal to ensure free and fair elections and not become tempted by illegal means of winning votes. It was obviously in the interest of governing and opposition parties alike, and the country as a whole, to have a free, fair and democratic election. IRI recommended to the parties to focus all of their time, resources and efforts on building their campaign organizations, delivering their message to the voters and otherwise ensuring an election of the highest standards.

Mission Two

IRI conducted the second election environment observation mission in Macedonia from July 15 through 19, 2002. Five teams, composed of experts from Europe and the United States, deployed throughout the country. They had meetings with local and national political party leaders, representatives of the media and NGOs. IRI teams met with representatives from all major parliamentary parties (governing and opposition) in all six electoral units. Twenty-five

different municipalities were represented, not only in major cities but also in small towns and villages. A total of 49 meetings were held with over 150 local and national leaders.

The election environment in Macedonia remained tense, with the general impression being that the parties were girding for battle – both in the political sense, and in some cases, in the sense of literal physical confrontation. IRI's second election environment observation mission saw increased political party activity compared with the first. Several of the parties and coalitions competing in the September elections had held large rallies to launch their election campaigns. As with the first mission, parties at the local level generally had not begun their campaign activities, indicating that they were waiting for the start of the official campaign period. At the same time, parties grumbled about their opponents beginning their campaigns 'illegally,' distributing leaflets and flyers before the start of the official campaign. By 'campaigning,' however, parties seemed to refer to electronic and print advertisement, billboards, posters, leaflets, etc.; virtually all parties mentioned efforts already underway to go door-to-door or otherwise canvass voters to check electoral lists and gauge existing support among the local electorate.

While parties themselves seemed more confident about their ability to compete freely and fairly, there was still a fairly widely held consensus that the elections themselves would not be credible, legitimate, or peaceful, and that the results would be fraudulent. As a whole, trust in the system – in the electoral system, political parties, the police, the judicial system, and the government – remained virtually nonexistent.

Parties continued to perceive a significant threat of violence during the election campaign and on election day. Numerous incidents of violence had occurred outside the context of politics – with causes ranging from continuing war-related violence to simple barroom brawls that were allowed to escalate out of control – that were seized upon and used by governing and opposition parties alike to score political points.

The fear of violence, the escalation of tension due to politicization of violence, and the lack of confidence in established institutions such as the police and judiciary have led many party activists to conclude that they needed to take matters into their own hands. Party leaders from governing and opposition parties continued to stress their commitment to "defend" party activists and supporters against violence from the other side. The 1999 and 2000 elections demonstrated that the presence of such 'defenders,' even absent any premeditated attempts to disrupt voting, can itself very easily precipitate clashes on election day.

There was a widespread expectation of significant fraud on election day, taking such forms as ballot box stuffing and family and proxy voting. All of the parties indicated that they would be fielding poll watchers in addition to their representatives on the polling boards. A number of the party representatives indicated that their parties would be conducting a parallel vote count. All of the parties indicated that their activists would be participating in training in the above areas, organized either by the international community or by the party itself.

Instead, all those with whom the mission met reiterated the request heard in the first mission: that

the international community mount an even more robust observation mission than the planned 750-member OSCE/ODHIR mission, so as to have international observers at each of the nearly 3,000 polling stations nationwide from opening to closing. Without such a presence, fraud and violence were deemed inevitable.

Mission Three

IRI conducted the third election environment observation mission in Macedonia from August 19 through 23, 2002. Five teams, composed of experts from Europe and the United States, deployed throughout the country. They had meetings with local and national political party leaders, representatives of the media and NGOs. IRI observers visited 20 different municipalities. A total of 65 meetings were held with around 100 local, national, and international leaders.

IRI's third election environment mission found party, media, and NGO leaders to be significantly more optimistic about both the current environment and their outlook for the upcoming elections. With few exceptions, those interviewed felt that the campaign to date had been proceeding calmly and without serious incident in their local area, and expected that this would also be the case on election day. In general, IRI observers had the impression that, as the official campaign had begun and the election date drew nearer, party activists from both governing and opposition parties recognized the importance of having an open, credible, and peaceful election and began to be more responsible in their statements.

The key exception to this general impression was the Tetovo region, where tensions remained high – both inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic – and expectations for violence and other irregularities on election day were still widespread. By contrast and perhaps surprisingly, however, Kumanovo, the other of last year's two key crisis regions, conformed to the more optimistic pattern noted across the country overall.

The week following the third mission saw a significant increase in tensions due to several incidents. The killing of two Macedonian police officers and the subsequent kidnapping of five ethnic Macedonians in the area of Gostivar, which were allegedly committed by the so-called Albanian National Army, seriously threatened the prospects for peaceful elections. At the same time, ethnic Macedonians blocked a road to prevent the Democratic Union for Integration, a party formed by the former rebels, from holding a rally in Skopje. The Ministry of Interior's announcement of a warrant for the arrest of DUI's Ali Ahmeti was another event, which raised tension after the third mission ended.

IRI's third observation mission was the first of the three to take place during the official campaign period. The week prior to the mission, President Trajkovski marked the official campaign with a much-lauded address to the people on August 14. He urged citizens to vote their conscience based on parties' stances on the issues of concern to them, and reminded voters and parties alike that the integrity of the election process is more important than any specific outcome. The campaign itself started with relatively little fanfare on August 16. In fact, many

of those interviewed expressed surprise at how quietly the campaign began – to them, another indication of the parties' commitment to avoiding provocative behavior. With few exceptions, those interviewed felt that campaign activities – public events, rallies, canvassing, etc. – had thus far taken place without incident. Complaints of violations of the election law were largely limited to complaints that parties started their campaigning before the official date, and complaints related to the tearing down and/or covering over of campaign posters and related material.

IRI conducted its third pre-election mission after the Regional Election Commissions and Municipal Election Commissions were established. The RECs and MECs were largely reported to be formed and functioning well. Most importantly, those interviewed expressed confidence in the functioning of electoral management bodies, from the State Election Commission down. Considered in the context of the overwhelming lack of trust in electoral institutions and processes observed by previous missions, as well as considering the lack of confidence in previous election management bodies, this expression of confidence in the effective and impartial functioning of the election management bodies was an extremely positive indicator for the election process.

B. Election Day Observation Mission

On the Eve of Elections

IRI's preliminary statement is attached as Appendix III. As noted, the delegates concluded that the election process was sound and accurately reflected the will of the electorate. IRI observers found no evidence of either widespread or systematic irregularity in the balloting process. The OSCE delegation, as well as the domestic monitoring organization, MOST, reached similar conclusions.

IRI's delegates deployed principally to the following cities in Macedonia: Skopje, Bitola, Ohrid, Tetovo, Gostivar, Debar, Strumica, Gevgelija, Stip, Berovo, Delchevo, Kumanovo, and Struga. Two teams deployed to each of the six electoral districts.

IRI's monitors visited both rural and urban sites, as well as military installations, prisons and hospitals. Delegates reported to IRI on Saturday evening following meetings with local party leaders, election officials, and NGOs. Delegates also reported to IRI's Skopje office several times on election day – Sunday, September 15, 2002. Final delegation reports were phoned in after ballot tabulation late Sunday night or early on Monday morning, September 16. IRI then debriefed all teams in Skopje on Monday morning before issuing its preliminary statement at a news briefing at the Holiday Inn Hotel in Skopje.

Prior to deploying, each team was provided with information about the local ruling party, opposition parties, MOST, OSCE, and local media. Teams then met with as many of these groups as possible prior to election day.

The political party representatives, election administrators, and NGO representatives that IRI observers met in Skopje and in the six electoral units did not report widespread or systematic obstacles to the conduct of campaigns by individual parties or coalitions, the filing and registration of candidate lists, or the formation of local and regional election administration structures. REC and the MEC representatives expressed confidence in their preparation. Representatives of the political parties and coalitions in Skopje and in the regions also expressed a generally high level of confidence in the preparedness of national, regional and local election administrative structures and their capacity to insure the integrity of the process.

The most frequently heard complaints focused on several issues: illegal enticement and intimidation of voters, politicized media coverage, incomplete voter lists and destruction of election materials.

Illegal Enticement
As during the pre-election missions in the summer of 2002, IRI delegates heard numerous allegations by the governing and opposition parties as well as by independent observers that voters were given illegal enticements to vote for a particular party. Methods of alleged enticements include the outright buying of votes by local party branches with specifically-allocated slush funds set aside for this purpose or the promise of employment for a voter or members of a voter's family. One less direct, but frequently mentioned, method of enticement involved the delivery of 'humanitarian aid' to villages or communities, with the clear understanding that the aid was being delivered by a particular party. Packages of coffee and other goods were allegedly distributed as part of VMRO-DPMNE door-to-door election campaign in the area of Strumica. SDSM reported that this practice was especially popular in neighborhoods where the Turkish and Romani minority lived. It is difficult to assess whether receiving such small gifts in any way affected voters' preferences.

Intimidation
IRI observers reported that the opposition complained that they had been attacked and suffered intimidation by VMRO-DPMNE associated thug elements in several districts. Such complains were made in virtually every electoral district, but few were confirmed by IRI observers. IRI's observers reported that the SDSM headquarters in Sveti Nikole had been turned over the night before the election, with election materials stolen or destroyed. In Prilep, IRI's delegates found that the billboards of the Together for Macedonia Coalition were blacked out.

On the night before the election, villagers from Chalakli, Bashibas and Rebrovo in Strumica area reported to the IRI's observation team that around 20 individuals, who arrived in SUVs, started intimidating the population. The population of these villages is mostly Turkish. IRI's delegates informed the OSCE representative in Strumica about the incident.

In Stip, SDSM alerted IRI's observers that reservist police units were allegedly posted at certain polling stations and they expected intimidation on election day. IRI observers, joined by a British Foreign Office official from the OSCE delegation investigated the case on the election

day, but the complaint proved to be unsubstantiated. In the contrary, the only police presence in front of each of the identified polling stations consisted of one regular police officer.

Election Administration

Election day was characterized by a high turnout of voters - more than 73% of the population 18 years and older exercised the right to vote. There were few and isolated incidents of violence. The delegates' overall impression of election day was very positive.

The voting process was generally orderly, except for a high incidence of group and proxy voting. The attitude of the voters toward the election was positive and responsible. Individual polling stations across the country were generally well organized. Polling station electoral boards had evidently received adequate training and performed their duties seriously and competently. The balloting process itself took place in a generally orderly manner and in an environment free of visible intimidation.   There were a few reported problems with registration lists, but relatively insignificant number of voters were denied the opportunity to cast ballots. The ballot tabulation and reporting processes advanced smoothly and IRI observers believe that votes were correctly tabulated or reported. The vote count was well organized, largely free of problems, and the ballot boxes were transported securely to the MEC.

IRI's team was particularly impressed with the SEC's excellent organization of the election process and the timely presentation of the initial election results to the public so that the results of the election were quickly known and accepted by all parties.

Opening Polling Stations
Teams were present at the opening of polling stations at 7:00 a.m. on election day. In general, polling sites appeared to have received adequate materials and to have been properly organized. Rules for insuring the safeguarding of the polling sites and the balloting materials also appeared to have been adequately applied. Rules prohibiting the placement of political campaign materials in or near voting stations were generally respected.

Delegates noted that voter registration lists, including lists for internally displaced persons, hospitalized persons and military personnel, seemed to be generally in order and all commission members were present as required by the law. At the opening of some polling stations, there was noticeable nervousness and tension between the members of the electoral board, but they quickly overcame the agitation and resolved their disputes with the help of the Electoral Board Procedure Manual.

All members of electoral boards were present at the opening of the polling stations observed by IRI's delegates. The voting materials were delivered in sealed boxes. The electoral boards inspected and opened them in the presence of political party poll watchers, domestic and international observers, and journalists. All required materials were present including minutes

forms 14, 15 and 19, the voter register, the ultra-violet lamp and security spray, and an additional ballot box in polling stations where the number of registered voters was large. The number of ballots received by the electoral boards was equal to the number of names on the voter lists.

There was a police officer in front of most polling stations or a couple of officers serving several stations. Many voters apparently preferred to come to the polling stations early in the morning, which led to lines forming in front of the polling stations. This, however, did not cause serious disturbances and the process remained orderly.

In some places, IRI's delegates noticed a suspicious presence of people sitting in cars parked in front of the polling stations, carefully observing the voters. Since they did not disturb the voters, IRI's observers concluded that their presence did not present a violation of the election process.

Balloting Process
In general, voting proceeded without incident at the polling sites visited by IRI delegates. Voters appeared to be knowledgeable about the polling process and brought proper identification. The members of the electoral boards appeared to be adequately trained and conducted themselves professionally, with very rare exceptions. They were helpful to voters who required information and provided open access to domestic and international observers.

Balloting proceeded in an organized fashion throughout the day. The electoral boards carefully checked the voters' names and identity papers. In some cases they refused to allow a person to vote based on inadequate identity papers or if the board did not find the name of the voter on the voter register. Police were called in one instance in District 5 when three voters beat up the president of the electoral board. The incident happened after the Electoral Board in the polling station 1336 in the village of Kosel refused to accept an old Yugoslav passport and the rejected voter returned with two of his friends to punish the electoral board. The president had to seek medical help and a deputy replaced him; the board recorded the incident in the polling station's minutes.

In some polling stations in Skopje, Kisela Voda, Strumica, Saraj, there were long lines and a lot of noise in the hallways leading to the polling stations. Some delegates also noticed undue influence on voters in Kisela Voda. There were people wearing T-shirts with the emblem of VMRO-DPMNE or children wearing SDSM T-shirts outside many polling stations in the area of Ohrid, Prilep, Bitola, Skopje, and Stip. In Ergelija, Stip area, young voters wearing VMRO-DPMNE T-shirts were warned by a high ranking electoral official that they were illegally advertising one political party. The group had already voted wearing their party T-shirts. Such incidents mostly took place in urban polling stations.

Young people wearing party emblems were often forming cordons of four or more at the entrance of the polling stations. When asked by IRI observers, they said that they were supervising the election or helping the police. In some villages in the Bitola area, IRI delegates noticed that such a presence might have discouraged many Albanian voters from coming to cast

their vote since there were few Albanians who had voted by the late afternoon. The IRI team saw a significant number of party activists in front of a polling station in the Romani neighborhood in Strumica, where 90% of the population is illiterate. A person identified himself as "a Lion," stayed in front of a polling station in Strumica and closely observed Romani families vote. He said he was an observer for the Rapid Reaction Force, the " Lions."

There were few reported problems with security around voting stations. IRI delegates reported that in the village of Novo Maalo, in District 4, a group of party activists blocked the entrance of the polling station and tried to prevent voters from participating in the election. Local people opposed the violators and chased them away from the polling station before a representative of the MEC managed to reach the village in the early afternoon.

The local media reported on an incident when an armed individual stole the ballot box in the village of Lesok and a bystander was wounded. Shortly before the incident, a group of armed civilians and their leader identified as a former member of the "Lions," threatened the electoral board. The SEC ordered repeat voting in two polling stations, one in Lesok where the polling was forcibly interrupted, and another in Orkuse near Gostivar, which did not open on election day.

Accessibility of Polls
Most polling sites were readily accessible to voters, but few were signposted. Many of the polling sites were located in schools, for example, which provided an excellent setting for voting to occur. Some challenges to voter access were noted, however. Many polling sites were located on the second floors of buildings, which made it difficult for elderly voters to reach them.

A common observation from delegates was that some polling sites were too small, creating the potential for overcrowding. In other polling stations, the voters were forming lines in front of the electoral board, which prevented the board members from directly observing the casting of ballots. In these cases, the party poll watchers and the election observers had a full view of the voting booths and the ballot boxes, but were unable to properly observe the work of the electoral board: checking voters' names, ID papers, the use of the ultra-violet lamp and the signing of the register.

Voter Privacy
All polling stations used unified and SEC-approved standing cardboard tri-fold screens. In most polling stations, there were two or three screens in the room, which did not allow for real privacy. This was troubling in the smallest stations where the screens looked squeezed next to each other.

Delegates reported that the screens in one polling station in Kisela Voda were moved around several times, which denied voters privacy. In a polling station in Skopje, there were mirrors in the vicinity of the voting booths allowing a view of the voting process. Despite the occasional lack of real privacy, observers did not report instances in which voters appeared to be interfered with, or in other ways intimidated or influenced, in filling out their ballots.

IRI's delegates noticed that there was a high incidence of family voting and proxy voting in virtually all electoral districts. The OSCE's delegates observed such a violation in 20% of the polling stations they visited. Although the issue of secrecy of voting and proxy voting was adequately addressed in the election law, the provision allowing for assistance of disabled or illiterate voters (Article 85) created an opportunity for family members or party activists to attempt influencing voters. As expected by many international observers, assisted, family, and proxy voting presented challenges to the electoral boards as in previous elections in Macedonia.

The delegates noted many instances of family voting, typically husband and wife. Observers commented on instances of group and family voting - more than one person in a voting booth at a time - in polling stations in Prilep, Ohrid, Strumica, and Skopje. IRI observers rarely felt that there was intent of fraud or intimidation in these cases. It is difficult to assess, however, to what extent group and family voting influenced the outcome of the elections.

Occasionally, cases of proxy voting were also reported when a relative was allowed to vote for another relative in his or her absence. Proxy voting is prohibited by the election law (Article 80) and is punishable by a fine or up to one-year imprisonment.

Voter Lists / Verification of Identification

Delegates reported a few significant problems involving the voter lists. There were instances where polling station workers had to refuse a voter the right to cast a ballot because his or her name did not appear on the registration list. Observers noted that in most polling places the electoral boards requested the identity papers specified in the law and did not make exceptions from the rule.

Delegates in District 6 noted complaints expressed by ethnic Albanian voters that they were being turned away because of lack of proper identification. According to the electoral boards, many of these voters showed up without a proper picture ID that verifies Macedonian citizenship. Many ethnic Albanians living in Macedonia do not possess Macedonian passports, because they do not meet the legal requirement for 15 years residence in the country. Most of them have Yugoslav passports.

Delegates reported on cases when the identification papers were not properly or consistently checked in District 1 and District 5. Four voters were allowed to cast their ballots without presenting identification papers in the village of Labunista, near Struga. The internally displaced people in Kumanovo were supposed to vote at a polling station in the hotel "Kristal," but there were not enough ballots delivered. The number of the names on the voter list was smaller than the number of people claiming to be living in this camp for internally displaced. The station closed before the end of election day for security reasons. OSCE's security asked IRI delegates to leave the station.

Police Presence

Although a police presence in front of the polling stations was not required by law, subsequent regulations by the SEC and coordinated work between the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Interior provided for involvement of the police in securing the election process. A police presence was required in front of each polling station, but they were only allowed to enter the polling stations at the request of the electoral board if there was any disturbance of the election process. Delegates noticed police in most polling places, but there were also a number of election sites without a visible police presence.

While the presence of the police was an apparent deterrent to interference with the electoral process, delegates observed that in some cases, they did not take adequate measures when there were violations of the electoral process. In the village of Novo Maalo in District 4, several individuals attempted to prevent the voters from entering the polling station. The police did not intervene, but the villagers themselves managed to chase the troublemakers away and restore the access to the polling station. Delegates noticed a police officer inside a polling station near Kocani.

Campaign Materials

As required by the election law, delegates noted that the majority of polling sites had posted the ballot listing the candidates and parties. Delegates did not report significant evidence of campaign materials in or around voting stations. In Strumica, a polling station was moved to a new location near the office of the VMRO-VMRO and the party office was asked to remove all election posters from the windows of the office. Although the unexpected relocation of the polling station caused protests by VMRO-VMRO activists, the Municipal Election Commission peacefully resolved the case.

Mobile Ballot Box

Procedures for handling the "mobile ballot box" – a provision to allow ill or infirm voters to cast their ballots – were uniform for all electoral boards and were conducted properly. Ballots were placed in their envelopes and then placed into the box at the polling station. The ballots were properly recorded in the polling station minutes.

Access for Election Observers

IRI encountered many international observers from the OSCE and the U.S. Embassy at various polling sites. IRI and OSCE monitors often exchanged information about the balloting process. Representatives from the domestic monitoring organization MOST were present in most polling sites that IRI delegates visited. It appeared that their coverage, however, was more limited in rural areas. Sometimes, the representatives of MOST looked very young and it became evident that some of them were high school students, who had not yet become voters themselves. In general, IRI delegates noted that MOST observers were courteous and well trained. Commissioners also appeared to respect their presence.

Except for one instance, IRI delegates did not encounter polling sites where they were refused entry or treated inappropriately. In polling station 2846 in downtown Skopje, the electoral board requested that the IRI delegates present their passports in addition to their official accreditation. One of IRI delegates had to leave the polling site after failing to show his passport. In the same district, two women refused to identify themselves to IRI's team after a high-ranking election commissioner told them not to say anything. The electoral board in the same polling station refused to let observers check the numbers on the ballot box ties.

Polling Station Closings and Vote Counting
In all cases, IRI observers reported that polling stations closed without incident at 7:00 p.m. Voters present at the polling station or in line waiting to get in at 7:00 p.m. were permitted to vote. Voting station commissioners and polling station workers were professional and conscientious in conducting the ballot count and in recording and reporting the results.

The procedures of counting ballots and completing the numerous required protocols proceeded relatively smoothly due to the clear rules and regulations of the SEC. Observers reported that the counting and reporting proceeded without incident in most polling stations. Ballots had to be recounted, or protocols retabulated only rarely, because of counting or other mathematical errors. In all observed instances, polling station teams proceeded patiently and conscientiously in identifying and correcting mistakes. All political party poll watchers, international and domestic observers, as well as journalists were allowed to be present at the ballot counting.

Ballot Security
Delegates did not note irregularities with regard to ballot security before and during the counting process. The ballot boxes were properly sealed and transported to the MEC by designated members of the electoral boards. Delegates reported that ballots were stored in a secure and orderly manner at the MEC sites. In some MECs, there were crowds of people waiting with ballot boxes and it was practically impossible for the IRI delegates to follow the ballots and observe the process of entering the results into the computer. However, most IRI teams reported that they were able to observe the work of the MECs and reported that it was conducted professionally and in an orderly fashion.orderly.

Findings and Recommendations

Finding 1: Group and Proxy Voting.

Group and proxy voting continue to present a breach of voting procedures. It remained a problem for Macedonia's electoral process, despite the significant improvement in addressing the issue in the new election law. While Article 80 of the election law banned proxy voting and there were significant fines envisioned for such a violation, an exception was made for people who due to physical disability or illiteracy were unable to vote without assistance (Article 85). Instead of being an exceptional and relatively rare occurrence, assisted voting was used as a pretext for family and group voting, which is a violation of the law. Apparently, the electoral boards allowed proxy voting in some cases, which was mainly due to insufficient knowledge of the provisions of the law. In many cases, however, the electoral boards declined to allow proxy voting.

Recommendation:

The State Election Commission needs to establish strict criteria determining the voters' eligibility for voting assistance. Specific written instructions stressing that family and group voting are illegal would make the electoral boards more aware of the issue and would prevent such a practice in future elections. Additional measures should be taken to deter violations of procedures by election officials and to punish those responsible for irregularities.

Finding 2: Voting Abroad

Macedonian citizens living in foreign countries were not able to vote without returning to Macedonia. Macedonia is a small country with a relatively high percentage of citizens who live and work abroad. Many people cannot exercise their right to vote, because they are unable to travel back to Macedonia for election day. The lack of legal provisions allowing voting at Macedonia's diplomatic missions abroad affects all ethnic communities of Macedonia and represents a shortfall of the electoral system.

Recommendation:

The election law should include provisions establishing a process whereby Macedonian citizens residing in foreign countries can vote. The voting could take place at Macedonia's diplomatic missions abroad in order to ensure ballot security and correct tabulating and reporting of the results.

Finding 3: System of Complaints

The system of addressing complaints from election commissions through the courts was not fully transparent, which led to suspicions and speculations about the reasoning of the decisions made to resolve contested issues.

Recommendation:
The law needs to adopt a more transparent mechanism of addressing complaints and contesting the elections, including public hearings and making the court records publicly available.

Finding 4: The role of the security forces

The law contains vague provisions relating to the role of security forces during elections. While it states that the facility in which the polling station is located shall be secured by the police and that the police are allowed to enter the polling station at the request of the electoral board, there are no explicit regulations regarding where the police shall be deployed and what their involvement shall be at each stage of the election. The SEC had to issue additional regulations to determine the role and involvement of the police on election day.

Recommendation:

The election law should include specific regulations about the deployment and role of the police at each stage of the electoral process.

Finding 5: Over-reliance on the judiciary and law graduates for participation in the election administration; requirement that judges–members of the electoral bodies are approved by the major political parties.

The election law over-relies on the judiciary and law graduates for appointment to the electoral bodies. The law requires that most of the appointees in the SEC, RECs and MECs, as well as the president of each electoral board, are judges or law graduates. This requirement created problems in smaller villages, where there were no residents holding a law degree. The law also required that the political parties agreed upon or made suggestions on the appointments of judges to the election commissions. Since seeking political approval for the appointment of judges to the electoral bodies practically compromises their neutrality, these provisions did not contribute to making the electoral process more credible.

Recommendation:

The law should not require political approval for the appointment of judges to the electoral bodies. The requirement for appointing law graduates as presidents of each electoral board should be changed to a requirement for university education regardless of the particular major.

Finding 6: Participation in the electoral administration

The election law stipulates that the appointees to the Regional Election Commissions, the Municipal Election Commissions and the electoral boards shall be proposed by the major ruling party and the major opposition party and excludes smaller parties and citizens' groups from participation in the electoral bodies. Although the major ruling and opposition parties can

recommend members of their partner parties to be appointed to RECs, MECs and EBs, many smaller parties and citizens' groups remain outside the election administration process. They are not included in the process through any more informal means such as regular consultations or expanded meetings. This led to rumors immediately after the elections that the major political parties had made arrangements among themselves for their electoral gains.

Recommendation:

The law should establish provisions for smaller parties and citizens' groups to be included in the work of the RECs, MECs and the electoral boards through regular consultations and expanded meetings. It is important that representatives of smaller political parties and citizens' groups witness and certify the counting and tabulating process at municipal and regional level in order to make the electoral process more credible. In other Eastern European countries, all parties qualifying for the ballot are permitted to nominate members of commissions at all levels. Macedonia should consider such a system, which works well elsewhere in the region.

Finding 7: Short election campaign

The official campaign period for the September 2002 elections was 30 days. Since no campaigning activities were allowed prior to mid-August, the political parties and citizens' groups were not given enough time to strategize and gradually develop their campaigns. Instead of steadily covering all electoral districts and conducting smaller issue based town hall meetings, the candidates had to resort to bombarding the electorate with campaign messages on television and holding large rallies on the town squares in the few weeks before the elections. While in a way the limited campaign time contributes to limiting the politization and polarization of the society, such a practice also limits the depth of the political parties' electoral campaigns, which are based on slogans rather than programs.

Recommendation:

The law should not establish time constraints for electoral campaigning. It may be necessary, however, to introduce time limits for holding town rallies and other outdoor activities that require gatherings of big crowds. Town hall meetings and discussions should be encouraged by the law.

Appendix I

POLITICAL PARTY PROFILES
As of September 2002

<u>Major Political Parties in Macedonia</u>

<u>*For Macedonia Together* Coalition</u>

Social Democratic Alliance of Macedonia (SDSM)

The SDSM is the successor party to the Communist League of Macedonia, which underwent significant reform and adopted the agenda of a modern social-democratic party. The party gained 31 seats in the National Assembly in the parliamentary elections in 1990 and formed a coalition government. In June 1992, Branko Crvenkovski was selected as Prime Minister.

In the general elections on 16 October 1994, the SDSM captured 58 parliamentary seats and became the leading party in the new governing coalition with the Liberals and Socialists. The party's popularity slipped through the decade under difficult economic conditions and it lost the parliamentary elections on 18 October 1998. For the first time since independence, the SDSM went into opposition. However, the SDSM was still very effective in capitalizing on the insecurities of the electorate and portraying themselves as the party of stability in a sea of change.

Former President Kiro Gligorov was a member of the SDSM. As a former official in the Yugoslav communist government, Gligorov had very high favorability ratings when he returned to Skopje in 1990 to help establish the independent Republic of Macedonia. Because the President managed to keep Macedonia out of the war in Yugoslavia while keeping his country relatively stable, he won high marks from the international community and his fellow citizens. Further enhancing his public stature was the car-bomb assassination attempt in 1995 that killed his driver and left the President seriously wounded. Gligorov opted not to run for re-election in 1999 when his five-year term expired, but nevertheless remains the most popular political figure in the country among ethnic Macedonians.

On the other end of the SDSM spectrum is the former Prime Minister, 35-year-old Branko Crvenkovski, former head of the Macedonian government and SDSM. He became Prime Minister when he was 29 and was widely considered a brash, political neophyte. However, he managed the government less as an ideological force than as a technocratic power. Unfortunately, reforms were slow or ineffective, and corruption was perceived to be widespread. Also, the party under Crvenkovski's leadership did not adapt itself to democracy, maintaining party structures and attitudes from the Communist era. All of these factors left the SDSM extremely vulnerable to VMRO's issue-oriented campaign message of reform in 1998.

Between 1998 and 2002, as the leading opposition party with 27 seats in Parliament, the SDSM worked hard to keep pressure high on Prime Minister Georgievski. With VMRO-DPMNE in coalition with the DPA, the SDSM between 1998 and 2000 briefly took up the banner of Macedonian nationalism, accusing VMRO of 'selling out' to the Albanians. SDSM leader Branko Crvenkovski led an aggressive campaign in 2000 to unseat VMRO-DPMNE, first running the 2000 municipal election campaign as a national referendum against VMRO rule and, when those elections returned mixed results, shifting his efforts to organizing a vote of no-confidence in Parliament.

With the onset of the ethnic Albanian insurgency in 2001 and VMRO's move back to nationalism, the SDSM abandoned the nationalist card to position itself as a responsible, moderate solution to the crisis in contrast to VMRO-DPMNE's radicalism. It continued this role as a member of the 2001 wide coalition government and as a signatory to the August Ohrid Agreement. During the election campaign in 2002, SDSM presented itself as a responsible alternative to VMRO-DMPNE's radicalism, arrogance, and corruption.

The SDSM led coalition "For Macedonia Together" gained half of the parliamentary seats (60 seats) in the September 2002 elections and formed a government with the newly established Union for Democratic Integration, a party founded by the political leader of the ethnic Albanian insurgents.

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)

The LDP was formed in April 1997 through a unification of the former Liberal Party of Macedonia (LPM), and the Democratic Party (DP). The two reform-minded parties participated together in the parliamentary elections in 1998, in the coalition *For a Better Life*. The coalition gained a mere four seats. After the poor showing, the leader of the LDP, Petar Gosev, who once held a high position in the Communist League, resigned as president of the party.

The LDP can give substantial credit for its present positive image to the charismatic Mayor of Skopje, Risto Penov, and his sophisticated staff. In an increasingly disillusioned country, Mr. Penov has received considerable public support because he is one of the few politicians in Macedonia to accomplish something that the citizens can see: in his case, the building of new roads and the planting of trees in Skopje. Since at least a quarter of Macedonia's voters live in Skopje, this gave the LDP a remarkable electoral advantage. The LDP probably had the most sophisticated political operation of any party in Macedonia going into the 1998 elections. They appointed a research/polling firm on retainer and developed a written campaign plan six months before elections.

In May 2000, the LDP entered into a 70%-30% opposition coalition agreement with the SDSM in preparation for local elections in autumn. Party leader Risto Penov was reelected as mayor of Skopje by an overwhelming majority, winning more than 80% of the vote in the first round.

Overall, however, the party's membership has declined, and its limited infrastructure, particularly outside of Skopje, prevents it from competing effectively with the major parties.

As a coalition partner of SDSM, the LDP was granted control of the Ministry of Health in the April – November 2001 'unity' government, and with the dissolution of that government, returned to the opposition alongside SDSM. The LDP was active in the pre-campaign period with a series of public events aimed at raising the awareness of the problems of unemployment and poverty in Macedonia. These issues were the party's main election campaign themes. The leader of the LDP campaign team is party Vice President Jovan Manasievski. LDP voters tend to be better-educated, urban, and middle-class; and the party tends to draw a great deal of support among managerial professions and civil servants.

As a partner in the governing coalition, the LDP was given four ministerial positions: the former leader of the party Petar Gosev was appointed as the Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister, the present leader Jovan Manasievski became the Minister of Labor and Social Policy. The LDP was also granted control of the Ministry of Agriculture and has one Minister without portfolio.

Other 'For Macedonia Together' Coalition Partners:

Democratic League of Bosnians in Macedonia
United Roma Party in Macedonia
Democratic Party of Serbs in Macedonia
Democratic Party of Turks in Macedonia
Democratic Alliance of Vlachs in Macedonia
Workers-Farmers Party of Macedonia
Christian Socialist Party of Macedonia
Green Party of Macedonia

Macedonia For You Coalition

Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party of Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE)

VMRO-DPMNE adopted the name of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (VMRO), established in the 19th century to fight against the Turkish rule. Along with staging several uprisings against the Ottoman Empire, the original VMRO was also responsible for numerous assassinations of political leaders and indiscriminate terrorist attacks in different countries in the Balkans. The present VMRO-DPMNE has not inherited either the structure, or the ideology of the 19th century VMRO.

VMRO-DPMNE held its founding congress in June 1990 in Skopje. The party platform called for "spiritual, economic, and ethnic union of the divided Macedonian people and the creation of a Macedonian state in a future united Balkans and united Europe." Established as a nationalist party, VMRO-DPMNE started slowly developing into a national center-right party throughout the 1990s.

In the first post-communist election in 1990, VMRO-DPMNE won 37 seats from a total of 120 in the National Assembly, a number surprising all other parties, but insufficient to form a government. Because VMRO-DPMNE's agenda included themes such as improvement of Macedonia's international position, eliminating pro-Yugoslav and communist tendencies in the country, defining the status of ethnic Albanians, and improving the nation's economy, the party was considered the most vocally anti-communist of the major political parties.

In the second parliamentary election in 1994, VMRO-DPMNE boycotted the second round of the elections, claiming fraud. This four-year exile from the official political life of Macedonia was not healthy for the party as it eroded its institutional standing and forced it to conduct its politics exclusively through the media criticizing the ruling party without seeming to have any positive agenda of its own.

Beginning in 1996, however, VMRO-DPMNE leaders made a concerted effort to visit foreign countries in order to increase their international profile. During the 1998 elections, VMRO-DPMNE for the first time put together a functioning campaign organization, conducted extensive grassroots activities, and otherwise presented itself as a more stable and sophisticated political organization.

These efforts paid off when, in the 1998 parliamentary elections, VMRO-DMPNE won 49 seats in the 120-member parliament, affording them a majority when combined with their coalition partner, the Democratic Alternative, which won 13 seats. As VMRO-DPMNE was still perceived as a nationalist party, its rise to power became significant for inviting the Democratic Party of Albanians to join the new government. This development cemented an already

established model of Macedonian politics - the inclusion of one of the Albanian parties in all governments of the newly independent state.   The leader of VMRO-DPMNE, Ljubcho Georgievski, was selected Prime Minister.

Once the vanguard of Macedonian nationalism, VMRO was suddenly accused of 'selling out' to the Albanian minority. These accusations intensified since the 1999 presidential elections when, with the overwhelming support of Albanian voters, VMRO candidate Boris Trajkovski came from behind in the second round of elections to defeat SDSM candidate Tito Petkovski.

Absorbed with the challenges of governing Macedonia in trying times, VMRO's leadership, both in government and in the party, has neglected the kind of issue-based voter outreach that was so successful for them in the 1998 elections.   Additionally, the party has been plagued with accusations of widespread cronyism at all levels, as well as major corruption in connection with large-scale privatization deals.   By 2000 municipal elections, VMRO was expected to fare poorly, and in fact lost most of Macedonia's major cities in the first round, but intense last-minute campaigning led to a better showing in the second round, and in terms of total mayoral and council seats held, the party finished more or less even with the opposition.

With the emergence of the ethnic Albanian 'National Liberation Army' and the outbreak of fighting in February 2001, VMRO began to move back to its more hard-line, nationalist roots. Throughout the crisis, VMRO leaders, led by Prime Minister Georgievski and Interior Minister Ljube Boskovski, advocated a military solution to the crisis and a firm government response to 'Albanian terrorists.' Boskovski, who as Interior Minister controlled the police, stood in stark contrast to President Trajkovski (Commander in Chief of the army) and SDSM Defense Minister Vlado Buckovski, who took a more moderate stance. This tension between army and police factions continued following the SDSM's departure from the wide coalition government, highlighting deep divisions within VMRO itself about its vision for the future of the country.

VMRO-DPMNE has a broad demographic base of support, though in general the party appeals to younger voters and those with only primary or secondary education. The party is particularly strong in rural areas and among farmers. Its geographic stronghold is primarily in the eastern part of the country.

VMRO-DPMNE's main campaign themes in the September 2002 election were security and national identity issues targeted at the ethnic Macedonian population in the country. Georgievski, along with government ministers including the controversial Minister of Interior Ljube Boskovski, made numerous appearances during police and army military exercises. Georgievski was vocal about what he called the negative effects of the presence of the international community in the Balkans and openly attacked the presence of NATO peacekeeping troops in the region.   The Prime Minister intended to position VMRO as the champion of the ethnic Macedonian people. The electorate, however, appeared to be pessimistic and tired of conflict and disillusioned by four years of VMRO arrogance and alleged corruption.

Liberal Party (LP)

The Liberal Party styles itself as the oldest political party in Macedonia, claiming roots in the first democratic party in the former Yugoslavia, established by Ante Markovic. In fact, however, the LP is a fairly new player on the political scene, having been formed out of group that splintered from the LDP in late 1999.

The LP is a centrist, pro-business, Euro-Atlantic-oriented party formed by Risto Gusterov, a businessman with no prior history in politics. During the municipal elections of 2000, the LP ran as an opposition party, with Gusterov stating that he would, 'join the governing coalition either in hell or in the ninth round of elections.' Nevertheless, following the Democratic Alternative's dramatic departure from the governing coalition in November 2000, the LP's three MPs, along with several dissenting MPs from the DA, aligned themselves with the VMRO-DPMNE and DPA, enabling VMRO-DPMNE to retain a slim majority in Parliament and keep power.

The LP was granted several ministerial positions in the newly-formed government, including two cabinet-level posts, and running as the governing coalition's nominee, LP-member Stojan Andov was elected Speaker of Parliament to replace DA member Savo Klimovski. Andov, Speaker of Macedonia's first democratically-elected Parliament while a member of the SDSM, went on to join the LDP before finally joining the LP. LP member Zoran Krstevski served as Deputy Prime Minister.

The formation of the 'unity' government led to a much-publicized rift within the LP with party leader Risto Gusterov accusing Stojan Andov of negotiating to keep his position as Speaker of Parliament without the consent of the party leadership. Gusterov, objecting to the LP's handover of the Foreign Ministry to the SDSM, publicly called for Andov to step down rather than see Sergan Kerim (DPA) leave his position as Foreign Minister. After a few public exchanges between Gusterov and Andov, Gusterov stepped down under pressure from the LP executive board while Andov was elected president of the party. He also retained the Speaker position, with Kerim stepping aside to assume the position of UN Ambassador. The LP also retained the Deputy Prime Minister position for Zoran Krstevski.

As Speaker of Parliament, Stojan Andov occupied the public eye between August and November, as he set the pace of ratification of the Ohrid Agreement. Asserting the primacy of Parliament over the four party signatories to Ohrid, Andov engaged in obstructionist tactics to delay ratification for two months before finally forcing passage in a flurry of legislative activity in mid-November. The LP remained in government, retaining the DPM position as well as the Ministry of Defense. The new Minister of Defense, Vlado Popovski, was previously the spokesperson of the party and was Defense Minister from 1992 to 1994.

As a coalition partner of VMRO-DPMNE, the Liberal Party lost power in the September 2002 elections.

<u>Democratic Union for Integration (DUI)</u>

The Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) – sometimes called by its Albanian-language acronym, BDI – was formed in June 2002 by the former political leader of the ethnic Albanian National Liberation Army Ali Ahmeti. DUI has taken a moderate stance, calling for the implementation of the Framework Agreement as the guarantor of a peaceful and integrated multi-ethnic Macedonia.

The DUI's emergence took an immediate toll on the existing ethnic Albanian political parties, as the party capitalized on frustrations among ethnic Albanians regarding the existing parties as well as the image of Ali Ahmeti as having delivered both rights and peace to the ethnic Albanian community. The party organized at the local level relatively slowly, and though it had branches in all major ethnic Albanian population centers, its success in the September 2002 elections was less a function of grass-roots organization than the extraordinary popularity of Ahmeti himself. The force of Ahmeti's personality and his reputation led to the DUI capturing an outright majority of the ethnic Albanian vote on September 15, 2002.

The party joined the SDSM and its coalition partners to form the new government of Macedonia. The DUI is in control of the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Transport and Communications, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Health; and has one Deputy Prime Minister for Political System.

Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA)

Until January 1998, the DPA was considered the most radical of the major Albanian political parties in Macedonia, emerging as a populist political party taking advantage of the political frustrations within the Albanian community of Macedonia. A relatively new party, the DPA formed in 1997 when NDP and PDPA joined together. Their list of grievances with the SDSM government was long. Parliament voted in mid-1997 to revoke the mandate of the DPA president, invoking a rule that permitted such action if the member was absent from sessions for six months or more (he had absented himself from the parliament for two years as a political protest). In a special election to fill the empty seat, the DPA President was once again voted into Parliament with 93% of the vote. Four DPA political leaders were sentenced in 1997 to anywhere from 2-13 years in prison for "inciting ethnic hatred" at the July 1997 Gostivar uprisings. They began serving their sentences in 1998. The DPA considered their leaders "political prisoners" and in response announced that all elected DPA officials would resign from office.

The DPA's charismatic President, Arben Xhaferi, accused the SDSM government of being openly hostile to the Albanian minority. He often used terms such as "genocide" to describe their activities. Some members of the DPA openly advocated the secession of western Macedonia in order to link up with the Albanian "motherland," creating a Greater Albania. Also, some DPA leaders have advocated such policies as the flying of the Albanian flag over

government buildings in Albanian-dominated areas of Macedonia. Such an incident led to the riots in Gostivar in 1997.

Given the extremism that characterized the DPA (not to mention VMRO's nationalist history), it came as a surprise to most observers when Prime Minister-elect Ljubco Georgievski of VMRO extended the invitation for the DPA to join his new government in 1999. The move, however, contributed to easing tension between the Macedonian and Albanian populations, particularly during the Kosovo crisis of 1999.

With the emergence of the National Liberation Army in early 2001 and its charismatic political leader, Ali Ahmeti, the DPA and other traditional ethnic Albanian political parties were in danger of being sidelined. The NLA claimed to be fighting for the same rights for ethnic Albanians that the Albanian political parties had been seeking for ten years – use of the Albanian language, Albanian-language higher education, proportional employment in state structures, and a change in the constitution to make Albanians a constituent nation equal to ethnic Macedonians – but were doing so backed by force of arms. Only by very carefully distancing themselves from the use of force in the eyes of the international community, while positioning themselves as legitimate political representatives with whom the Macedonian parties could negotiate, were the DPA and PDP able to retain their legitimacy in the eyes of the Albanian electorate.

In general, the DPA tends to do well among male Albanians, voters with elementary and secondary education, and rural voters. Based in Tetovo, the party's support is drawn almost entirely from the northwestern part of the country. In the previous parliament, the DPA held 11 seats and participated in the government of Ljubcho Georgievski. The DPA was the most popular political party among ethnic Albanian voters until the formation of former NLA leader Ali Ahmeti's DUI, which threatened to sideline all of the other ethnic Albanian political parties.

Since the DUI's formation, the DPA was engaged in a three-prong strategy to regain its primacy: first, the party recruited a number of high-profile former NLA commanders to leadership positions within the party, in an attempt to 'out-NLA' Ahmeti. Second, the party engaged in an intense effort to engage and consolidate its formidable grass-roots network – a clear advantage the party enjoys over the DUI and its other competitors. Finally, as Ahmeti and the DUI have moved to adopt a moderate position vis-à-vis the Framework Agreement and the future of the Albanian minority in Macedonia, the DPA has returned to its roots, using nationalist rhetoric (including hints at ambitions for a Greater Albania) and characterizing the Framework Agreement as only the beginning of ethnic Albanians' fight for rights in Macedonia.

The DPA gained only seven seats in the new National Assembly, elected on September 15, 2002 and went into opposition.

Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP)

Until 1998, the PDP was considered the more popular of the two major ethnic Albanian parties in Macedonia. At the time, in fact, the PDP was part of the SDSM-led governing coalition, holding several (relatively minor) ministerial portfolios. Beginning in mid-1997, however, the PDP began losing ground to the DPA among the ethnic Albanian community.

The violence in Gostivar in July 1997 – a defining moment in current Albanian political consciousness – brought ethnic tensions within Macedonia to new heights. Because PDP was part of the governing coalition, some in the Albanian community began to consider them "collaborators" with the "repressive" SDSM government regime. The PDP was therefore in a particularly difficult political position for the 1998 elections.

The PDP's major political demands are similar to those of DPA: Albanian language higher education, more Albanians working in state institutions, the use of Albanian as a second language of the state, and more autonomy for municipal governments. After joint protests in solidarity with the Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK), the PDP joined in an electoral coalition with DPA for the 1998 elections, garnering 14 seats in Parliament, but split with its coalition partner following the DPA's decision to join the governing coalition. Since the 1998 elections, the PDP's fortunes have continued to decline, and the party fared extremely poorly in the 2000 local elections.

With the onset of the National Liberation Army's insurgency in 2001, the PDP adopted a more radical stance than the DPA, refusing from the start to condemn violence and referring to NLA rebels as 'our sons and brothers,' with whom it felt the government should negotiate directly. Demanding that the government call a permanent cease-fire, the PDP persisted in taking an obstructionist stance until the final hours of negotiations over the formation of the 'unity' government, finally relenting under considerable international and domestic pressure. The PDP was a signatory to the Ohrid Agreement.

Since Ohrid, the PDP, like the DPA, has struggled to maintain its relevance in the face of Ali Ahmeti's popularity. While Xhaferi's DPA has successfully repositioned itself as the most popular ethnic Albanian party, the PDP has fared less well, lagging behind the new National Democratic Party in the polls. In the last months before the September 2002 elections, the party membership split between centers of power in Skopje and in Tetovo.

Although the party's ministers in the wide coalition government were successful in pushing thorough the Amnesty Law for former NLA members and the passage of the Local Self-Government Law, they largely failed to capitalize on these victories. PDP leader Imer Imeri stepped down in the spring of 2002, and questions raised about his replacement – and about the procedure in which he was selected – have fractured the party. New party leader Abdurahman Aliti (who had led the PDP prior to Imeri) does not enjoy the support of some key figures in the party, such as the General Secretary, Muhamed Halili.

The formation of the DUI proved to be a serious blow to the PDP, as many members and leaders defected to join Ahmeti's party. Since that time, the PDP started showing a consistent decline in

opinion polls and managed to gain only two seats in the September 2002 election. PDP is widely thought to be fighting for its survival as a party.

National Democratic Party (NDP)

NDP was formed in March 2001 by its controversial leader and former PDP member of parliament, Kastriot Haxhirexha. Haxhirexha, who by profession is a medical doctor, was active during the student demonstrations in Kosovo in 1981 and as a result was jailed for 6 years by the former Yugoslav authorities.

The party platform proposes radical decentralization of the government and Haxhirexha has publicly advocated a federal state along ethnic lines. He has criticized the Ohrid Agreement for failing to grant rights to the Albanian community and has openly invited members of the former NLA to join the ranks of his party. A pre-election coalition agreement between the NDP and DUI failed and the two parties run on separate ballots. The NDP's headquarters are in Skopje, as opposed to Tetovo, which has traditionally been the center of Albanian political life in Macedonia. While the NDP fared well in the polls immediately after its founding, it began steadily losing support before the September 2002 election and managed to gain only one seat in the new parliament.

Socialist Party of Macedonia (SPM)

The SPM positions itself as the force for progressive change in Macedonia and likens itself a local version of European socialist parties. The party readily admits that its only political option is as a middle-class party, eschewing any revolutionary agenda. They vigorously distance themselves from their communist past, yet still revere Tito as a true socialist leader.

The SPM draws its membership primarily from the working class, with a few intellectuals to provide ideological focus. Unlike many of its West European counterparts, the SPM is working for free-market economic reform in addition to its more traditional focus on social welfare proposals. The SPM garnered only one seat in Parliament in the 1998 elections, and owes its continued survival to its relationship with the SDSM and to a small but consistent base of support for its leader, successful businessman Ljubislav Ivanov.

The Socialist Party was in coalition with the SDSM and the LDP for the 2000 local elections, and was widely expected to remain in coalition leading up to the 2002 parliamentary elections. In a much-publicized break, however, the SPM failed to arrive at a coalition agreement with the SDSM, and competed alone in September 2002. The SPM gained one seat in the new parliament.

Democratic Alternative (DA)

Formed in May of 1998, the Democratic Alternative is led by Vasil Tuporkovski, at the time among the most trusted politicians in Macedonia, mainly because of his previous positions in the federal Yugoslav joint presidency and his chairmanship of the Macedonian Political Committee. However, his participation in the Yugoslav joint presidency is also his largest political liability. In 1989 during the height of student protests, Tuporkovski was the deciding vote in favor of sending tanks into the streets of Belgrade.

Leading up to the 1998 elections, the DA presented itself as a centrist party without the nationalist baggage of VMRO-DPMNE nor the alleged corruption of the SDSM. The DA appealed to voters who were disillusioned by their political choices and wanted a fresh alternative. Tuporkovski himself proved a smart political strategist and campaigner. The DA captured 13 seats in the 1998 elections and was a member (if an often publicly-dissenting one) of the VMRO-led governing coalition.

Following the 2000 municipal elections, Tuporkovski attempted to capitalize on public dissatisfaction with the VMRO-DPMNE government, vocally criticizing his coalition partner. Finally, in a dramatic public announcement, Tuporkovski withdrew his party from the government and sided with the SDSM-led opposition in an attempt to force a vote of no confidence. The move was unsuccessful, and six DA MPs left the party to side with the governing coalition, three as independents and three as members of VMRO-DPMNE.

In the months before the September 2002 elections, the party was experiencing a crisis of leadership, with numerous members of the party presidency having resigned in protest of the party's apparent lack of unity and direction. The SDSM, meanwhile, distanced itself from the DA in response to pressure from its coalition partners, and did not invite the DA to join the 'unity' government.

The dissolution of the 'unity' government may also have served as the death knell of the DA. Tuporkovski, irked at not being invited to join Georgievski's post-unity government, instructed his remaining MPs to vote against the new government. Ignoring these instructions, the DA MPs declared themselves to be 'independents' and voted for the new government, leaving the DA with no MPs and with dim electoral prospects. Tuporkovski himself, burned by political miscalculations and by association with Macedonia's failed (and likely corrupt) adventure with Taiwan, now rates as by far the least favored among Macedonian politicians. The DA did not gain any seats in the new Macedonian parliament in 2002.

VMRO-VMRO and VMRO-Makedonska

VRMO-VMRO (or 'True VMRO') is a splinter party centering around six VMRO-DPMNE MPs, who split from the VMRO-DPMNE parliamentary group to form VMRO-VMRO in August 2000. The split received considerable public attention and prompted unrest in several cities, as angry crowds surrounded the MPs' homes and businesses, some reportedly throwing

rocks. Police at the time were criticized for taking a passive approach to the violence, and to date, no one has been charged with any crime in connection with the incidents.

Boris Stojmenov, a successful businessman, founding member of VMRO-DPMNE, and former Minister of Economy, was originally the party's leader. In the period following the local elections, the VRMO-VMRO joined the opposition coalition, signing an alliance agreement with SDSM. VMRO-VMRO has a similar platform and ideology to VMRO-DPMNE but opposes its leadership and methods of governance. Despite having six MPs in Parliament, VMRO-VMRO has little if any of the organizational infrastructure that characterizes an established political party.

In 2002, VMRO-VMRO Vice President Boris Zmejkovski orchestrated a party coup and succeeded in replacing Boris Stojmenov as the leader of the party. Stojmenov – a staunch opponent of Prime Minister Georgievski – decided to leave the government, forming a new VMRO splinter party: VMRO-Makedonska (or 'Macedonian VMRO'). Zmejkovski's VMRO-VMRO remained in government, with his party heading the Agency for Privatization. Neither VMNMRO-VMRO nor its splinter parties gained any seats in the new Macedonian parliament in 2002.

New Democracy

New Democracy is a fairly new political party founded by breakaway members of the Democratic Alternative in April 2001. The split from DA occurred as a result of dissatisfaction of some top members who did not want to leave the governing coalition. New Democracy had four seats in the previous parliament and was a member of the previous government.

Although the party opted to run independently in the September 2002 elections, two of its members appeared on the Macedonia for You coalition's lists. New Democracy did not gain any seats in the new Macedonian parliament in 2002. One of its members, however, Slobodan Chasule, was elected as member of parliament from Macedonia for You (VMRO-DPMNE and LP) coalition.

Democratic Alliance

The Democratic Alliance was formed by Pavle Trajanov at the end of 1999, following his departure as Minister of Internal Affairs in Prime Minister Georgievski's first government. A career employee of the ministry, Trajanov was on VMRO-DPMNE's proportional list in the 1998 elections as an 'expert' candidate, though he was never a member of the party. The Democratic Alliance presents itself as a centrist third option, and was briefly in coalition with the Democratic Center, before finally deciding to run independently in September. The party did not gain any seats in the new Macedonian parliament in 2002.

Democratic Center

One of Macedonia's newest parties, the Democratic Center was formed in May 2002 by four MPs who defected from the Democratic Alternative. The party has a unique rotating presidency, currently held by MP Radomir Karangelovski. The Democratic Center also presents itself as a centrist third option. The two parties were briefly in coalition before finally deciding to run independently in September. The party did not gain any seats in the new Macedonian parliament in 2002.

Appendix II

Election Environment Observation: Mission One

Mission Findings

Republic of Macedonia

June 9-15, 2002

Background

In an effort to contribute to free and fair elections in the Republic of Macedonia, the International Republican Institute is conducting three observation missions leading up the parliamentary elections in September. These election environment observation missions are in response to requests from parties to be engaged in the electoral and political processes well before polls open this Fall. This report, in addition to other documents that may be produced for this or future missions, is meant to assist the political parties and their leaders in efforts to conduct credible and democratic elections.

From June 9 through 15, 2002, the first election environment monitoring mission was held in the Republic of Macedonia.   Five teams, composed of experts from Europe and the United States, deployed throughout the country. They had meetings with local and national political party leaders, representatives of the media and NGOs. IRI teams met with representatives from all major parliamentary parties (governing and opposition) in all six electoral units.   Twenty different municipalities were represented, not only major cities but also small towns and villages. A total of 57 meetings were held with 107 local and national leaders. This report represents the findings of the first mission.

General Findings

Overall, the election environment in Macedonia is tense, and the political parties are extremely concerned about their ability to campaign freely and fairly. Their concerns are focused on a few key areas: violence, intimidation, the media, and campaign financing.   While very little campaign-related activities have yet begun, parties have started the process of becoming organized for the election. However, trust in the electoral system, in political parties, in the judicial system and in the government is very low.   There is little confidence among the governing parties, the opposition, or the public seem that this election can be conducted within international democratic standards. Governing parties believe that the opposition will steal the election through manipulations of voter cards, electoral lists or the media, or through the use of violence. Opposition parties believe that ruling parties will steal the elections through violence, intimidation, the misuse of state-run media, or through direct election fraud; they are already preparing for civil disobedience. While to date there are few credible allegations of actual misconduct in the pre-election period, the high levels of anxiety and the widespread lack of trust in any institution or organization means that the campaign in general — and election day in particular — will be seen as de-stabilizing events and fraught with physical and political dangers. Instead of describing the election as a positive opportunity to voice one's opinion about who should lead the country, voters and political leaders express fear for election day and what it means for them, for their parties and for the country.

Potential Problems

- **Violence**

  Findings:

  Because of the proliferation of weapons and the presence of armed groups in all areas of the Republic of Macedonia, political parties fear the use of violence for political purposes. Both opposition and governing parties (as well as journalists and NGO leaders) feel that the potential for violence is a major threat to a free and fair election. The conflict of 2001, as well as the entrance into the political environment of combatants, has caused concern that members of armed groups may try to force their will upon the electorate or at the very least poison the pre-election period with implied threats of violence. Also, because of violent incidents in the last two national elections—incidents that the judicial system failed to address—preparations to "defend" party activists against violent incidents could itself precipitate clashes on election day, even if there were no premeditated attempts to disrupt voting. The fear of violence at polling sites could also suppress the vote and may well distort the outcome of the election if voters are not assured of their safety well before election day itself. Efforts to arm political activists for security or other purposes, something suggested by a few party leaders, will only heighten the potential for conflict. Moreover, the use of violence in any form during the campaign and on election day can do nothing but damage the integrity of political parties and the electoral process. Security to protect voters, election commissioners or candidates is solely the obligation of police.

  Recommendations:

  Party leaders need to communicate to their members and supporters, as well as the general public, on the need for peaceful, non-violent elections. They should ensure that no one affiliated with their party will use violence or the threat of violence to affect the campaign or elections.

- **Illegal Enticement/Intimidation**

  Findings:

  There are widespread allegations by both the governing and opposition parties (as well as other observers) that voters will be given positive enticements to vote for a particular party (cash, employment, gifts, etc.). Or that intimidation will be used (threats of loss of employment, of violence, of slander, etc.) to frighten voters into supporting a particular party. Some contend that voters are already being bribed in order to secure their (and their family's) vote. Some allege that this is being done through cash payments or through promises of employment. There are serious risks of enticement and intimidation

in the upcoming elections. As long as the secrecy of the vote can be assured, these efforts, while clearly illegal and unethical, cannot change someone's vote. However, since voters do not trust the electoral process, and therefore they fear their vote will not remain secret, illegal enticement or intimidation could have an effect on the outcome of the vote.

Recommendations:

Party and government leaders should direct all party and governmental officials to abide by the spirit and the letter of the election law and actively work against illegal enticement and intimidation.

- **Media**

  Findings:

  While virtually every local party leader said that his or her party would be able to effectively communicate with the voters, much concern was addressed about the lack of objectivity in the media and the absence of journalistic standards or legal framework to prevent libel and/or slander. In addition, some local media were concerned that governmental agencies would cut services to their operation in an attempt to silence them during the election campaign.

  Recommendations:

  National and local media should implement strict internal guidelines to prevent libel or slander during the election campaign and to ensure objective and balanced reporting. Also, government officials at the national and municipal level should ensure that no decisions about the continuation or cessation of services are being made for political purposes.

- **Campaign Finance**

  Findings:

  Most party activists were deeply concerned about the lack of control over campaign and party financing. There were many allegations by both governing and opposition parties of improper donations to political parties. While party and campaign financing is the least likely to be transparent and open to scrutiny, it is essential that government resources—whether they be municipal or national, financial or human—not be used for political purposes.

Recommendations:

All government officials and business leaders should make sure that their organizations are abiding by the letter and the spirit of laws that don't allow the misuse of public or private resources for political purposes.

International Involvement

There was virtual unanimity among party and community leaders that the international community has a constructive role to play in the September elections. The most important suggestion was for international election observers to remain in a single polling station from before the commencement of voting at 07.00 until all the votes have been counted and protocols signed sometime after 19.00. Leaders felt that mobile observers were not as effective at observing or preventing fraud as static units.

Unfortunately, there was also a sense among party leaders that the international community will be the prime vehicle for ensuring democratic elections. Absent the will among citizens for free and fair elections, it is not possible for the international community, no matter how well intentioned, to impose free and fair elections on Macedonia. The vast majority of citizens in Macedonia truly want free and fair elections, but they must take responsibility for the elections. Government employees, public prosecutors, police, businessmen, judges, election officials, party leaders and other responsible citizens must not allow intimidation or illegal activities to affect the outcome of the election.

Conclusion

With elections in two months, it is important for all political leaders to ensure discipline among their activists and supporters. With a relatively unhealthy election environment and rampant cynicism, political leaders must stay focused on the need for free and fair elections and not become tempted by illegal means of winning votes. It is obviously in the interest of governing and opposition parties alike, not to mention the country as a whole, to have free, fair and democratic elections this fall. Parties should be focusing all of their time, resources and efforts on building their campaign organizations, delivering their message to the voters and otherwise ensuring an election of the highest standards.

Election Environment Observation:
Mission Two

Mission Findings

Republic of Macedonia

July 15-19, 2002

Background

In an effort to contribute to credible and legitimate elections in the Republic of Macedonia, the International Republican Institute is conducting three pre-election observation missions leading up to the parliamentary elections in September.   These election environment observation missions are in response to requests from parties for IRI to be engaged in the electoral and political processes well before polls open this fall. This report, in addition to other documents that may be produced for this or future missions, is meant to assist the political parties and their leaders in efforts to conduct credible and democratic elections.

IRI conducted the second election environment observation mission in Macedonia from July 15 through 19, 2002.   Five teams, composed of experts from Europe and the United States, deployed throughout the country.   They had meetings with local and national political party leaders, representatives of the media and NGOs. IRI teams met with representatives from all major parliamentary parties (governing and opposition) in all six electoral units. Twenty-five different municipalities were represented, not only in major cities but also in small towns and villages. A total of 49 meetings were held with over 150 local and national leaders. This report represents the findings of the second mission.

General Environment

The election environment in Macedonia remains tense, with the general impression being that the parties are girding for battle – both in the political sense, and in some cases, in the sense of literal physical confrontation. IRI's second election environment observation mission saw increased political party activity compared with the first. Several of the parties and coalitions competing in the September elections have held large rallies to launch their election campaigns. As with the last mission, parties at the local level generally have not begun their campaign activities, indicating that they were waiting for the start of the official campaign period. At the same time, parties grumbled about their opponents beginning their campaigns 'illegally,' distributing leaflets and flyers before the start of the official campaign. By 'campaigning,' however, parties seemed to refer to electronic and print advertisement, billboards, posters, leaflets, etc.; virtually all parties mentioned efforts already underway to go door-to-door or otherwise canvass voters to check electoral lists and gauge existing support among the local electorate.

Interestingly, during this second round, parties generally seemed *slightly less* concerned about their own ability to campaign freely and fairly, though it is difficult to say whether this stemmed from an opening of the electoral environment or from parties' increasing convictions that they are 'ready' for what their opposition will try to throw at them. The latter interpretation is certainly consistent with the fairly militant attitude observed among all of the parties.

While parties themselves seemed more confident about their ability to compete freely and fairly, there is still a fairly widely-held consensus that the elections themselves will not be credible, legitimate, or peaceful and that the results will be fraudulent. As a whole, trust in the system – in

the electoral system, political parties, the police, the judicial system, and the government – remains virtually nonexistent.

Worthy of note, however, is that in this mission, far more so than in the last, IRI began to see a *localization* of people's outlook regarding legitimate and peaceful elections. In the first mission, very few tangible signs of election problems were evident, and people had only their past experiences, current fears, and rumor upon which to base their assessment of how elections would unfold. In this mission, while the overall atmosphere nationwide can still be described as overwhelmingly pessimistic and fearful, it is clear that party activists at the local level are beginning to take a harder look at their own communities and what are likely to be the problems there. As a result, IRI saw a polarization of views during this mission. On one hand, a greater number of activists from across the political spectrum reported that they did not believe major problems are likely in their communities during the campaign or on election day. On the other hand, in the communities where activists *do* expect problems, albeit in relatively fewer areas, it seems that these expectations are increasingly grounded in facts, as concrete instances of election-related problems become more evident.

Potential Problems

Violence

Findings:

Parties continue to perceive a significant threat of violence during the election campaign and on election day. The proliferation of weapons in Macedonia – far more widespread than in previous elections due to the intervening crisis – as well as the continued presence of organized armed groups throughout the country continues to contribute to fear of politically-motivated violence. As stated in the first mission findings, the conflict of 2001, as well as the entrance into the political environment of former combatants in that conflict, has caused concern that members of armed groups may try to force their will upon the electorate or at the very least poison the pre-election period with implied threats of violence.

Additionally, numerous incidents of violence have occurred outside the context of politics – with causes ranging from continuing war-related violence to simple barroom brawls that were allowed to escalate out of control – that have been seized upon and used by governing and opposition parties alike to score political points. This politicization of violence serves only to make bad situations worse and to escalate the already significant tension and fear of violence being used for political means.

Finally, this fear of violence, the escalation of tension due to politicization of violence, and the abovementioned lack of confidence in established institutions such as the police or judiciary have led many party activists to conclude that they must take matters into their own hands. Party leaders from governing and opposition parties continue to stress their commitment to "defend"

party activists and supporters against violence from the other side. The 1999 and 2000 elections have demonstrated that the presence of such 'defenders,' even absent any premeditated attempts to disrupt voting, can itself very easily precipitate clashes on election day.

Recommendations:

The fear of violence at polling sites could suppress the vote and may well distort the outcome of the election if voters are not assured of their safety well before election day itself. Parties must clearly and publicly remind their activists and supporters that there is no place for violence in the political or electoral process, and that security to protect voters, election commissioners or candidates is solely the obligation of police.

Illegal Enticement/Intimidation

Findings:

As in the previous mission, there are widespread allegations by both the governing and opposition parties (as well as other observers) that voters will be given illegal enticements to vote for a particular party. More and more concrete instances of such allegations were noted in this second mission. Methods of alleged enticements include the outright buying of votes by local branches with specifically-allocated slush funds set aside for this purpose or the promise of employment for a voter or members of a voter's family. One less direct, but frequently mentioned, method of enticement involves the delivery of 'humanitarian aid' to villages or communities, with the clear understanding that the aid was being delivered by a particular party.

The flip side of enticement is intimidation. Allegations remain widespread that intimidation will be used to frighten voters into supporting a particular party, such as the threat of loss of employment of the voter or the voter's family members; the threat of eviction from property, etc.

As stated in the first mission report, there are serious risks of enticement and intimidation in the upcoming elections. As long as the secrecy of the vote can be assured, these efforts, while clearly illegal and unethical, cannot change someone's vote. However, since voters do not trust the electoral process, and therefore they fear their vote will not remain secret, illegal enticement or intimidation could have an effect on the outcome of the vote.

Recommendations:

Party leaders need to remind all party activists and supporters that campaigning should not include the offering of jobs, money, or other benefits, particularly if public money is at stake. Parties need to publicly stress to their local activists that the use of intimidation, whether direct or indirect, is not in the interest of any party, can seriously undermine the legitimacy of elections, and is not in any way sanctioned or tolerated by party leadership.

Media

Findings:

The media environment seems not to have changed significantly since the first mission and thus remains a significant issue. As before, while virtually every local party leader said that his or her party would be able to effectively communicate with the voters, concerns remain about the lack of objectivity in the media and the absence of journalistic standards or legal framework to prevent libel and/or slander. Local media continue to be concerned that governmental agencies would cut services to their operations in an attempt to silence them during the election campaign. One area of concern not raised in the first mission: both governing and opposition parties alike complain that the media outlets 'hostile' to their party will charge artificially high advertising rates as compared with those offered to competing parties, thus posing a barrier in key media markets.

Recommendations:

National and local media should implement strict internal guidelines to ensure objective and balanced reporting during the election campaign and to prevent libel or slander. Government officials at the national and municipal level should ensure that no decisions about the continuation or cessation of services are being made for political purposes. The political parties should each publicly call upon their respective activists and supporters who will play a role in the media coverage of the campaign to act in accordance with the party's firm commitment to fair and objective media coverage for all parties competing in the election.

Campaign Finance

Findings:

IRI's findings and recommendations in this area remain virtually unchanged from the first mission. Party activists remain deeply concerned about the lack of transparency of, and control over, campaign and party financing. There were many allegations by both governing and opposition parties of improper donations to political parties. While it is increasingly unlikely as the election approaches that party and campaign financing will be made to be transparent and open to scrutiny, it is essential that government resources – whether they are municipal or national, financial or human – not be used for political purposes.

Recommendations:

All government officials and business leaders should make sure that their organizations are abiding by the letter and the spirit of laws that do not allow the misuse of public or private resources for political purposes.

Expectations for Election Day

Findings:

There remains the widespread belief that there will be significant fraud on election day, taking such forms as ballot box stuffing, family and proxy voting, etc.; as well as the abovementioned concerns about violence on election day itself. All of the parties have indicated that they will be fielding poll watchers in addition to their representatives on the polling boards. A number, but not all, of the party representatives indicated that their party would be conducting a parallel vote count. All of the parties indicated that their activists would be participating in training in the above areas, either organized by the international community or by the party itself. None of the party representatives, however, felt that any of the above measures would serve to check election day fraud or violence.

Instead, all those with whom the mission met reiterated the request heard in the first mission: that the international community mounts an even more robust observation mission than the planned 750-member OSCE/ODHIR mission, so as to have international observers at each of the nearly 3,000 polling stations nationwide from opening to closing. Without such a presence, fraud and violence were deemed inevitable.

IRI also noted that a number of party branches were conducting "public opinion research" with no basis in accurate survey methodology. These "polls" are being shared with the party faithful and media and, predictably, show the sponsoring party invariably leading the pack. This raising of expectations among party activists and members may lead to disappointment and claims of fraud on election day.

Recommendations:

The international community, Macedonian government officials, and party leaders must take care in their public statements to set realistic public expectations for what the OSCE/ODIHR and other international election observation missions can and will do to prevent electoral abuses. At the same time, the international community, Macedonian government officials, and party leaders must clearly and repeatedly stress to the citizens of Macedonia that they must take responsibility for the elections, and that absent the will among parties and voters alike to have a free, fair, and peaceful election, no international observation will be able to impose it.

Conclusion

It remains more crucial than ever that political parties ensure discipline among their activists and supporters and hold them to the highest standards of behavior prior to and on election day. As representatives of the people, political leaders have the responsibility to look beyond this

particular election and to recognize that having credible, legitimate, and peaceful elections that meet international standards is more important than a particular election outcome. Parties should be devoting their time and energy to building and mobilizing their organizations and getting their message out to the voters – competing as best they can in the contest of ideas, while above all publicly committing themselves to the sanctity and integrity of the electoral process as the best guarantee of a positive future for Macedonia and all of its citizens.

Election Environment Observation:
Mission Three

Mission Findings

Republic of Macedonia

August 19-23, 2002

Background

In an effort to contribute to credible and legitimate elections in the Republic of Macedonia, the International Republican Institute has conducted three pre-election observation missions leading up to the parliamentary elections in September.   These election environment observation missions are in response to requests from parties for IRI to be engaged in the electoral and political processes well before polls open this fall. This report, in addition to other documents that may be produced for this or future missions, is meant to assist the political parties and their leaders in efforts to conduct credible and democratic elections.

IRI conducted the third election environment observation mission in Macedonia from August 19 through 23, 2002.   Five teams, composed of experts from Europe and the United States, deployed throughout the country.   They had meetings with local and national political party leaders, representatives of the media and NGOs. IRI teams met with representatives from all major parliamentary parties (governing and opposition) in all six electoral units.   Observers visited 20 different municipalities, not only in major cities but also in small towns and villages. A total of 65 meetings were held with around 100 local, national, and international leaders. This report represents the overall findings of the third mission.

General Environment

IRI's third election environment mission found party, media, and NGO leaders to be significantly more optimistic about both the current environment and their outlook for the upcoming elections. With few exceptions, those interviewed felt that the campaign to date had been proceeding calmly and without serious incident in their local area, and expected that this would also be the case on election day. In general, IRI observers had the impression that, as the official campaign has begun and the election date draws nearer, party activists from both governing and opposition parties have recognized the importance of having an open, credible, and peaceful election and have begun to be more responsible in their statements, leading to a lessening of some of the rumors and speculation shared with previous missions. With this more responsible and realistic outlook has come an increased sense of optimism, as activists take a harder look at the real situation in their respective communities without the earlier bias of rumor or fear.[ii]

The key exception to this general impression was the Tetovo region, where tensions remain high

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[ii] *Editor's note: the week following this third mission saw a significant increase in tensions due to several incidents related to inter-ethnic tensions following last year's war. The killing of two Macedonian police officers, the subsequent kidnap and release of five ethnic Macedonians (both in the Gostivar area and both claimed to have been carried out by the so-called Albanian National Army), an ethnic Macedonian roadblock targeted at preventing Ali Ahmeti's Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) from holding a rally in Skopje, and the Interior Ministry's announcement of a warrant for Ahmeti's arrest all are events which have raised tensions since the third mission ended. If more such incidents occur they could serve to reverse the generally optimistic trend noted by the third mission's observers.*

– both inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic – and expectations for violence and other irregularities on election day are still widespread. By contrast and perhaps surprisingly, however, Kumanovo, the other of last year's two key crisis regions, conformed to the more optimistic pattern noted across the country overall.

IRI's third observation mission was the first of the three to take place during the official campaign period. The week prior to the mission, President Trajkovski marked the official campaign with a much-lauded address to the people on August 14, in which he urged citizens to vote their conscience based on parties' stances on the issues of concern to them, and reminded voters and parties alike that the integrity of the election process is more important than any specific outcome. The campaign itself was kicked off with relatively little fanfare on August 16. In fact, many of those interviewed expressed surprise at how quietly the campaign began – to them, another indication of parties' commitment to avoiding provocative behavior. With few exceptions, those interviewed felt that campaign activities – public events, rallies, canvassing, etc. – have thus far taken place without incident. Complaints of violations of election law were limited largely to complaints that parties started their campaigning before the official date, and complaints related to the tearing down and/or covering over of campaign posters and related material.

Similarly, this was the first of the missions to take place with the full complement of Regional Election Commissions and Municipal Election Commissions in place. The RECs and MECs were largely reported to be formed and functioning well. Most importantly, virtually across the board those interviewed expressed confidence in the functioning of electoral management bodies, from the State Election Commission down. Considered in the context of the overwhelming lack of trust in election institutions and processes observed by previous missions, as well as considering the lack of confidence in previous election management bodies, this expression of confidence in the effective and impartial functioning of current election management bodies is an extremely positive indicator for the election itself.

Potential Problems

Violence

Findings:

Though overall fears of violence have reduced, parties continue to express concern of violence during the election campaign and on election day. As stated in the first two mission findings, the conflict of 2001, the widespread proliferation of weapons throughout the country, and the entrance into the political environment of former combatants in that conflict, have caused concern that members of armed groups may try to force their will upon the electorate or, at the very least, poison the pre-election period with implied threats of violence. This is particularly true in former 'crisis areas' and in areas with a significant presence of special police units.

Observers in this third mission had the impression that rumors of violence were in many cases most likely just that – rumors – but that in some cases these rumors were very deliberately being utilized to stoke fears among the electorate. Rather than focus on the likelihood that threats of violence would be realized, those interviewed focused more on the deliberate use of the threat itself (most likely with no intention of carrying out violence), either to coerce voters to vote a certain way or to prevent voters from coming out to vote at all. Though the fact that many of the threats of violence are seemingly hollow has positive implications for the level of violence on election day, it is nevertheless a point of concern if being used by parties or groups to influence the vote on election day.

While heard less often in this mission, there is also still the concern that party activists, lacking confidence in established institutions such as the police or judiciary, may respond to violence or threats of violence by taking matters into their own hands. Party leaders from governing and opposition parties continue to stress their commitment to "defend" party activists and supporters against violence from the other side. The 1999 and 2000 elections have demonstrated that the presence of such 'defenders,' even absent any premeditated attempts to disrupt voting, can itself very easily precipitate clashes on election day.

Recommendations:

The fear of violence at polling sites could suppress the vote and may well distort the outcome of the election if voters are not assured of their safety well before election day itself. Parties must clearly and publicly remind their activists and supporters that there is no place for violence in the political or electoral process, and that security to protect voters, election commissioners or candidates is solely the obligation of police.

Illegal Enticement/Intimidation

Findings:

Widespread allegations by both the governing and opposition parties (as well as other observers) persist that voters are being given illegal enticements to vote for a particular party. Methods of alleged enticements include the outright buying of votes by local branches with specifically-allocated slush funds set aside for this purpose or the promise of employment for a voter or members of a voter's family. The current mission heard of increasing instances of the delivery of 'humanitarian aid' to villages or communities in the form of flour, vegetables, or other staples, with the clear understanding that the aid was being delivered by a particular party.

The flip side of enticement is intimidation. Allegations remain widespread that intimidation will be used to frighten voters into supporting a particular party, such as the threat of loss of employment of the voter or the voter's family members; the threat of eviction from property, etc.

Enticement and intimidation remain serious risks in the upcoming elections. As mentioned in

previous reports, the key to eliminating this risk is ballot secrecy – both the secrecy itself and people's belief in it.   As long as the secrecy of the vote can be assured, efforts at either enticement or intimidation, while clearly illegal and unethical, cannot change someone's vote. However, since voters do not trust the electoral process, and therefore they fear their vote will not remain secret, illegal enticement or intimidation could have an effect on the outcome of the vote.

Recommendations:

Party leaders need to remind all party activists and supporters that campaigning should not include the offering of jobs, money, or other benefits, particularly if public money is at stake. Parties need to publicly stress to their local activists that the use of intimidation, whether direct or indirect, is not in the interest of any party, can seriously undermine the legitimacy of elections, and is not in any way sanctioned or tolerated by party leadership.

Media

Findings:

The media environment seems not to have changed significantly since the first mission.   As before, while virtually every local party leader said that his or her party would be able to effectively communicate with the voters, concerns remain about the lack of objectivity in the media and the absence of journalistic standards or legal framework to prevent libel and/or slander. Local media continue to be concerned that governmental agencies would cut services to their operations in an attempt to silence them during the election campaign. Both governing and opposition parties increasingly complained in this mission of instances in which media outlets 'hostile' to their party have been charging artificially high advertising rates as compared with those offered to competing parties, thus posing a barrier in key media markets.

Recommendations:

National and local media should implement strict internal guidelines to ensure objective and balanced reporting during the election campaign and to prevent libel or slander. Government officials at the national and municipal level should ensure that no decisions about the continuation or cessation of services are being made for political purposes. The political parties should each publicly call upon their respective activists and supporters who will play a role in the media coverage of the campaign to act in accordance with the party's firm commitment to fair and objective media coverage for all parties competing in the election.

Campaign Finance

Findings:

IRI's findings and recommendations in this area remain virtually unchanged from the first mission. Party activists remain deeply concerned about the lack of transparency of, and control over, campaign and party financing. There were many allegations by both governing and opposition parties of improper donations to political parties. While it is increasingly unlikely as the election approaches that party and campaign financing will be made to be transparent and open to scrutiny, it is essential that government resources – whether they are municipal or national, financial or human – not be used for political purposes.

Recommendations:

All government officials and business leaders should make sure that their organizations are abiding by the letter and the spirit of laws that do not allow the misuse of public or private resources for political purposes.

Expectations for Election Day

Findings:

While widespread concerns that there will be significant fraud on election day, taking such forms as ballot box stuffing, family and proxy voting, etc.; as well as the abovementioned concerns about violence on election day itself; these concerns have lessened significantly since the previous missions (as discussed in the general environment above). Both parties and NGOs such as MOST have dramatically increased their activity in terms of training activists and preparing to observe the election itself. Overall, however, the belief prevails that the international community's role in observing the election is critical, and that *only* the international community can serve to guarantee an open, credible, and peaceful election.

All of the parties have indicated that they will be fielding poll watchers in addition to their representatives on the polling boards. A number, but not all, of the party representatives indicated that their party would be conducting a parallel vote count. All of the parties indicated that their activists would be participating in training in the above areas, either organized by the international community or by the party itself.

From the civic side, MOST and their partner NGOs are recruiting a significant number of domestic observers for election day. MOST partner NGOs were optimistic that they would reach their goals. One concern expressed is that volunteer recruitment has become more difficult given the high demand on the part of international observation missions for interpreters and drivers – paid positions that seem more attractive to qualified individuals than volunteering as a domestic observer.

Recommendations:

The international community, Macedonian government officials, and party leaders must take care in their public statements to set realistic public expectations for what the OSCE/ODIHR and other international election observation missions can and will do to prevent electoral abuses. At the same time, the international community, Macedonian government officials, and party leaders must clearly and repeatedly stress to the citizens of Macedonia that they must take responsibility for the elections, and that absent the will among parties and voters alike to have an open, credible, and peaceful election, no international observation will be able to impose it.

<u>Conclusion</u>

IRI is encouraged by the increased sense of responsibility and of optimism observed throughout the country with regard to the September 15 parliamentary election. As noted above, events subsequent to this mission have already put that optimism to the test. Without observing the impact of these events on the local level, it is difficult at this writing to measure the damage that these events may already have done to the process. It is safe to say, however, that if the citizens of Macedonia hold on to the sense of responsibility noted by the third mission's observers and remain committed themselves to doing their part to insure an open, credible, and peaceful election, then the agendas of those who would disrupt the process – after this mission, seeming increasingly to be in the minority – will find no fertile ground in which to take root.

Appendix III   **Preliminary Statement**

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE   Contact: Steven Susens

September 16, 2002   070-783-458

Statement

Observation Mission to the 2002 Macedonia Parliamentary Elections

SKOPJE, MACEDONIA – The International Republican Institute (IRI), a non-profit, non-partisan, non-governmental organization headquartered in Washington, DC sent a 30 member delegation to monitor the Macedonian parliamentary elections on September 15, 2002. The IRI delegation was led by IRI's president, George A. Folsom, Senator Richard Bennett of Maine, Senator Dino Rossi of Washington State, and Mayor Neil Giuliano of Tempe, Arizona. This is the preliminary statement of the delegation's findings. A more comprehensive statement will be released in approximately 45 days.

IRI deployed twelve teams of monitors from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and the United States to all six electoral regions. They monitored 250 polling stations in 45 municipalities. Prior to the elections, IRI's delegation had a series of briefings on the election law, Macedonian politics and history, and the campaign environment. These briefings were conducted by representatives of the State Election Commission, major political parties, and other Macedonian experts.

The International Republican Institute's observation mission operated independently from other international observers, including those deployed by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. IRI has long term experience with election monitoring, having observed the 1994 and 1998 elections in Macedonia, as well as recent elections in the Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Croatia, Czech Republic, East Timor, Hungary, Mexico, Nicaragua,

Nigeria, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine, Venezuela, and other countries. The goal of IRI's election monitoring missions is not to provide a snap judgment on the elections, but rather to catalogue ways that countries can improve their electoral laws and practices.

MAIN FINDINGS

- By and large, the election process was orderly and peaceful. IRI delegates did not encounter any major incidents that would cast doubt on the fact that these elections are a generally accurate reflection of the will of the Macedonian voters. IRI notes the publicized incidents of violence with regret, but does not believe that they unduly influenced the outcome of the elections.
- Strong turnout can be interpreted as a vote of confidence for the democratic process and the elections themselves.
- The State Election Commission is to be commended for a successful effort to educate Macedonian voters about the new election law. IRI monitors noted that with very few exceptions, voters arrived with the proper identification and were familiar with the election process.
- The polling station election boards appeared to have handled the elections with skill and without conflict. Most of the election officials observed by IRI were well trained and worked in a collegial atmosphere. The State Election Commission and non-governmental organizations both contributed to efficient and orderly working of the election boards.
- The presence of international monitors, domestic non-partisan monitors, and political party monitors contributed to the smooth functioning of the elections. There was a very strong domestic monitoring effort this year, with monitors at the vast majority of stations visited by IRI delegates. While some party monitors were overzealous, IRI believes that partisan observers are an important check on the fairness of the electoral process.
- The police operated as was intended and IRI did not observe any instances of inappropriate police activity.
- IRI did witness groups of partisans outside a number of polling stations. Although IRI monitors did not see intimidation of voters, election officials and police could have exercised greater efforts to keep the areas outside polling stations from loitering.
- There were a number of incidents of harassment of interviewers for IRI's exit poll, despite a ruling by the State Election Commission that the exit poll was permitted under Macedonian law. In several cases, partisans physically attacked exit poll workers or otherwise disrupted proceedings. In IRI's judgment, these incidents did not greatly affect the accuracy of the poll, the first exit poll ever conducted in Macedonia.
- In contrast with the 1998 parliamentary elections, IRI monitors witnessed fewer instances of family and proxy voting. While this continues to be a problem in Macedonia, particularly in rural areas, there has been a marked improvement since the last parliamentary elections. There did appear to be a greater awareness among election officials of the problem of family and proxy voting than four years ago.
- With minor exceptions, the voter lists appeared to be accurate and IRI did not observe large numbers of voters encountering problems. The new system of marking voters'

thumbs generally worked well, although IRI monitors did note that it was not universally implemented.
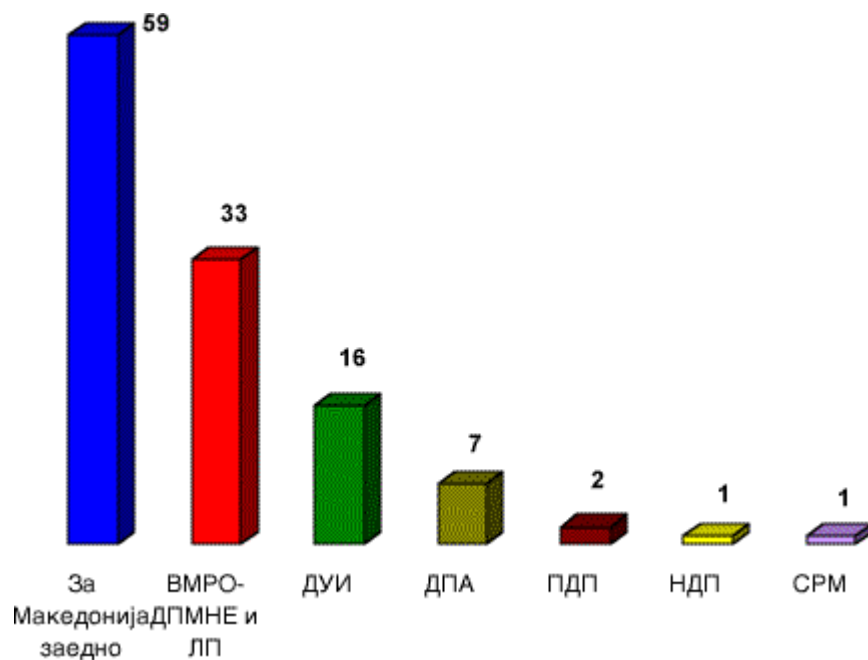
Prior to the elections, IRI conducted a series of three pre-election monitoring missions with political experts from Europe and North America. These pre-election missions examined the overall environment in the months leading up the elections, including the organization and establishment of the election authorities, the role of the media and non-governmental organizations, political parties and their campaigns, and the role of ethnic minority groups. The delegation noted with satisfaction that election authorities and political parties did contribute to a generally calm and orderly election day.

The reports of these missions, which are available at IRI's website at www.iri.org, documented concerns long before the elections over violence, voter intimidation, and an unfair media environment. IRI delivered these reports, together with additional information, to representatives of the State Election Commission, Macedonian government, major political parties, the media, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations and foreign embassies.

IRI has worked in Macedonia since 1990 on a variety of programs designed to strengthen and develop Macedonia's political and democratic institutions. IRI's assistance in Macedonia is funded by the United States government, through US AID (the United States Agency for International Development). IRI works with a variety of democratic political parties, youth political organizations, government institutions, and non-governmental organizations.

Appendix IV

RESULTS OF 2002 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

	Coalitions and Parties	% Won	Seats
For Macedonia Together (За Македонија Заедно)	Social Democratic Union for Macedonia, Liberal Democratic Party, Democrat League of the Valahians, United Party of the Romas in Macedonia, Democratic party of the Serbs in Macedonia,		60
VMRO-DPMNE and LP (ВМРО-ДПМНЕ и ЛП)	Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity and Liberal Party		33
DUI (ДУИ)	Democratic Union for Integration		16
PDP (ПДП)	Party of Democratic Prosperity		7
NDP (НДП)	National Democratic Party		2
SPM (СПМ)	Socialist Party of Macedonia		1
TOTAL			**120**

Appendix V

Members Elected and Seated in the Macedonian Parliament
September 2002 Elections

For Macedonia Together

Gjorgji Spasov
Kenan Hasipi
Ana Andova
Andrej Zernovski
Angel Dimitrov
Angelka Peeva-Laurenchik
Blagoj Golomeov
Boris Kondarko
Branko Crvenkovski
Cvetanka Gasoska
Cvetanka Ivanova
Svetle Janeska
Dragan Gjorgjiev
Eleonora Petrova Mitevska
Esad Rahik
Igor Ivanovski
Ilija Filipovski
Ilinka Mitreva
Ivan Anastasovski
Ivan Stoilkovik
Janake Vitanovski
Jani Makraduli
Jordan Mihajlovski
Jovan Manasievski
Kame Petrov
Karolina Ristova
Kire Gestakovski
Kosta Presoski
Liljana Ivanovska
Liljana Popovska
Mite Nikolov
Natasa Bikovska
Nezdet Mustafa

Nikola Kurkchiev
Nikola Apostolovski
Nikola B. Kamchev
Nikola Popovski
Petar Apostolov
Petar Gosev
Lupcho Jordanovski
Radmila Sekerinska
Rafet Muminovik
Riste Bislimovski
Roza Topuzova-Karevska
Slave Arsoski
Slavica Grkovska
Slavica Stankovska
Slavko Petrov
Slobodan Najdovski
Sonja Lepitkova
Tale Geramitchioski
Tito Petkovski
Tome Trombev
Trifun Kostovski
Vancho Gjorgiev
Vlado Buchkovski
Vlado Ilievski
Zoran Sapurik
Zoran Tomik

VMRO-DPMNE and LP

Zarko Karagjoski
Gjorgji Orovchanec
Gjorgji Trendafilov
Gjorge Palaskovski
Chedomir Kralevski
Adnan Kahil
Blaze Stojanoski
Drago Sajnoski
Eftim Manev
Ganka Samoilova Cvetanka

Ilija Kitanoski
Ilija Srbinovski
Koce Trajanovski
Marija Kojzekliska
Marjan Gjorchev
Mihajlo Georgievski
Nikola Gruevski
Ordancho Tasev
Petar Naumovski
Lubcho Georgievski
Lube Boskoski
Lupche Meskov
Lupcho Balkovski
Ristana Lalchevska
Risto Pejoski
Sasko Kedev
Silvana Boneva
Slobodan Chasule
Slobodan Danevski
Spiro Mavrovski
Stojan Andov
Vancho Stamenkov
Zoran Krstevski

DUI

Abdilaqim Ademi
Agron Buxhaku
Ali Ahmeti
Polozani Aziz Pollozhani
Ejup Rrustemi
Fazli Veliu
Gezim Ostreni
Hazbi Lika
Hyseini Hysein Xhevat
Hysni Shaqiri
Nazmi Beqiri
Nevzat Bejta
Rafiz Aliti

Talat Xhaferi
Teuta Arifi
Xheladin Shatku

DPA

Arber Xhaferi
Fatmir Asani
Iljaz Halimi
Tachi Menduh Thaci
Ruzdi Ruzhdi Matoshi
Xhevdet Nasufi
Zejdi Xhelili

PDP

Abduraman Aliti
Ismet Ramadani

NDP

Xhezair Shaqiri

Socialist Party

Lubisav Ivanov-Xingo

Appendix VI

Members of the New Government

Branko Crvenkovski, Prime Minister, SDSM

Radmila Shekerinska, Deputy Prime Minster for European Integration, SDSM

Hari Kostov, Minister of Interior, SDSM

Ilinka Mitreva, Minister of Foreign Affairs, SDSM

Vlado Buckovski, Minister of Defense, SDSM

Aleksandar Gestakovsdki, Mister for Local Self Government, SDSM

Blagoja Stefanovski, Minister of Culture, SDSM

Ilija Filipovski, Minister of Economy, SDSM

Ljubomir Janev, Minister of Ecology and Urban Planning, SDSM

Petar Gosev, Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister, LDP

Jovan Manasievski, Minister of Labor and Social Policy, LDP

Slavko Petrov, Minister of Agriculture, LDP

Vklado Popovski, Minister without portfolio, LDP

Ismail Dardhishta, Minister of Justice, DUI

Milaim Ajdini, Minister of Transport and Communications, DUI

Aziz Pollozhani, Minister of Education, DUI

Rexhep Selimi, Minister of Health, DUI

Musa Xhaferi, Deputy Prime Minister for Political System, DUI