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REPORT

**“ELECTION SYSTEMS AND ELECTIONS IN MEMBER COUNTRIES OF TURKPA
and ELECTION OBSERVATION ACTIVITIES OF THE ASSEMBLY”**

ELECTIONS AND ELECTION SYSTEMS IN MEMBER COUNTRIES OF TURKPA

A) INTRODUCTION

Representative democracies are the systems in which people elect their representatives as a means to execute their sovereign rights for a certain period time; and they legitimize their representatives and administrators and in case their expectations are not satisfied, these representatives and administrators are replaced by voting (elections). Therefore, elections are essential elements of democracy.

Member countries of TURKPA have achieved international standards in terms of human rights, democracy and supremacy of law since their foundation by progressing in democratization process and by developing regulations. However, democratization is an everlasting process.

In the Third Meeting of the TURKPA Legal Affairs Commission held in April 28th, 2014 in Astana, it was decided to take the subject of “Investigation of Election Regulations of Member Countries” into the agenda of the Fourth Meeting in order to develop regulations of Member countries of TURKPA concerning elections the most significant indicator of democracy, to share relevant information and experiences, and institutionalize election observation activities carried out by TURKPA, ~~and to bring TURKPA to the level where it can guide other countries in democratization process.~~

B) ELECTION SYSTEMS

I. Election System

The irreplaceable element of the provision of democratic legitimacy is the phenomenon of *election*. *Elections*, at most extensive context, are the process in which administrators are determined and/or authorized by the people administered. *Election system* can be seen as a mechanism which turns votes of citizens into chairs of representatives. In the extensive meaning, *election system* is the integrity of rules concerning how political representation will be executed.

Within this description, *election system* includes all issues regarding eligibility to vote and to be candidate, rules concerning candidacy, voting principles, election environments, election principles, organization of elections, and management and auditing of elections.

Finally, *election systems* can characterize both political system and composition of parliament created as a result of elections.

II. Election System Types

Election systems in effect in democratic countries can be characterized under three different titles as follow: *Pluralist systems*, *systems based on proportional representation* and *hybrid systems*.

The plural system was embraced based on representation of nations within the Great Britain and the United States of America. However, in 19th century, *majority rule* in both the continental European countries and Anglo-Saxon countries exhibited difficulty in fulfilling individuals’ needs as a result of development of opinions such as centralization of peoples and protection of minorities against majority democratic regimes. Indeed, emergence of *proportional representation system* is the product of efforts to develop systems ensuring justice in representation.

Accordingly, while *majority rule* refers a system in which a party who receive the majority of votes wins, purpose of the *proportional representation system* is to ensure to transform the votes given into chairs in a proportional way. In order to eliminate adverse sides of these two formulas, there are *hybrid systems* created, which consider positive dimensions of both systems.

While the Great Britain and its old colonies and the United States of America is executing the *majority rule*, it has been observed that the Continental European countries has usually adopted *proportional representation system*.

a. Pluralist Election Systems

As it can be understood from its title, *pluralist election system* is selection the candidate who receives majority of votes in the election region. There are different methods in execution of this

system. This system is characterized in two types: *Single-round and runoff election* majority rules; and single-round majority rule is characterized as follows: *Single-round single-member district system, list system (block vote) election, and alternative voting system.*

b. Election Systems based on Proportional Representation Principle

The systems based on the *proportional representation* is the one that lets political parties determine their candidates as a list to have chair in the parliament according to their vote proportion within the framework of the election. Election systems based on proportional representation are characterized in two ways as *national-level* and *election district*.

Proportional representation at the national scale: In this system, all country is considered as an election district and political parties nominate candidates for the positions of MPs (members of Parliament) in number equal to the number of chairs in the parliament. Valid votes across the country are divided by the number of deputy so as to estimate “national election quota” and political parties are assigned number of chairs in proportion to their vote rate.

Proportional representation at the level of election district: According to this system, country is divided into election districts which are assigned number of deputies. Political parties are given chairs in the parliament according to their vote proportion of each individual election district. In order to resolve issue of leaving surplus vote out of consideration in elections conducted based on the proportional representation principle, one of the following methods are preferred: “*the largest surplus method*”, “*the most powerful average method*”, “*national remainder system*”, and “*D’Hondt method*”.

Advantages of the System Based on Proportional Representation:

- Ensures “fair representation” by taking majority of votes given into consideration.
- Ensures representation of different political tendencies and opinions at the parliament.
- Compared to the majority rule, allows less votes to be wasted.
- Enables parliament system to gain new and dynamic strength by allowing small-sized political parties to be represented at the parliament.

Disadvantages of the System Based on Proportional Representation

- Although it allows number of parties to be represented at the parliament, it is hard for a single party to come power.
- Unstable governments are established due to establishment of coalition governments.

c. Hybrid Systems

Hybrid systems arisen by considering advantages and disadvantages of pluralist systems and proportional representation principle in the context of *fairness in representation* and *stability in administration* principles so as to strengthen election system. It carries characteristics of both systems. From the technical perspective, it is up to countries which part of either system to be included in the created system.

C) ELECTIONS IN MEMBER COUNTRIES OF TURKPA

Republic of Azerbaijan

In the short period time of independent Azerbaijan Democratic Republic between May 28th, 1918 and April 28th, 1920, issuance of the law concerning conducting deputy election based on democratic principles of that period for foundation of a national parliament on July 21st, 1919 can be considered as a significant step in terms of formation and development of parliament in the Azerbaijan history.

In the contemporary Republic of Azerbaijan, there have been thirteen elections and five referendums conducted since October 18th, 1991. Relevant dates of these elections and referendums were presented below:

Presidential elections: 1992-1993-1998-2003-2008-2013

Parliamentary elections: 1995-2000-2005-2010

Domestic (Municipal) elections: 1999-2004-2009

Referendums: 1991-1993-1995-2002-2009

Whereas the first parliament election of Azerbaijan was held in 1995, the presidential election was held in 1992.

The law concerning with citizens' right to elect and be elected is the most essential legal assurance given by the constitution about participation of citizens into administration of government and social affairs within the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan Constitution guarantees the right for election with its 56th provision: "*Citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan have right to elect and be elected for government bodies; and to participate in referendums. The individuals whose actual ineligibility is proven through Court have no right to participate into both elections and referendums. The right to participate in election for military personnel, judges, government officers, religious clerics, persons whose freedom is limited based on a court decision, and other individuals mentioned in this constitution can be limited through law.*"

Again, in the 2nd article of the Constitution it is mentioned that "*Azerbaijan people execute their sovereignty right through representatives selected as result of free, blind polling and individual voting based on direct election-referendum and general, fair and direct election right.*"

One of the requirements in execution of election regulations is arrangement of voting environment. This issue is expressed within 83rd article of the Constitution as "*Republic of Azerbaijan National Assembly deputies are elected general, fair and direct election right based on majority election system through free, personal, and blind polling*". According to 84th article, it is regulated as "*Republic of Azerbaijan National Assembly deputies are elected in every 5 years, on the first Sunday of the November.*"

At a referendum conducted on August 24th, 2002, an amendment in the Constitution was done and proportional majority and hybrid election system relying on narrow district election system was removed and general proportional pluralist election system was adopted. Beside this amendments, calculation of results of Presidential elections based on the simple majority voting (50+1 % of voters) principle; submission of annual activity report to the National Assembly by the government; taking authority to close political parties from the Constitutional Court and giving this to the general courts; determination of alternative military service; assignment of authority to the Hear Republic Prosecutor and Supreme Court for proposing a bill; and giving citizens' rights to appeal Constitutional Court directly.

In Azerbaijan parliamentary elections are conducted in every five years; 125 deputy chairs are assigned to the candidates with the highest votes, who are participated from the relevant election districts based on the majority rule was introduced. Until the referendum conducted in 2002, there was an election system which allows twenty-five members to be elected based on the proportional representation. By means of several amendments, a majority rule in which strong political parties have advantaged position. The new system was first applied during the election in 2005.

In the Republic of Azerbaijan, every citizen older than 24 can be elected as deputy to the Republic of Azerbaijan National Assembly in a way prescribed by the relevant law. Individuals with dual citizenship, with liability before other countries, with duty at executive and jurisdiction bodies, and individuals with salaried position except scientific, pedagogical and creative activities, religious clerics, individuals whose ineligibility is endorsed by the court, persons convicted indictable offense, and persons prisoners charged with certain decisions of the court at the correction facilities cannot be elected as deputy.

Azerbaijan uses runoff election majority rule in narrow districts. Political parties participate in elections with two separate lists in hybrid election system: one for country election district and the other for narrow election districts.

The Central Election Commission determines district election rules and ballot box commissions.

Auditing and endorsement of the election conducted for National Assembly deputies is carried out by the Republic of Azerbaijan Constitutional Court as it is regulated by the relevant law (Constitution, Article 86).

Characteristics of presidential candidates and election foundations were described by the 100th and 101st article of the Constitution. Hence, Azerbaijan citizens, who are not younger than 35 and who

lived within Republic of Azerbaijan soils continuously longer than ten years, who has right to participate in elections, who has not been convicted of felony, who has no any liability to other countries and does not have dual citizenship, and who has graduate degree can be selected as the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

If twenty five percent of the electors participate in elections and uses their votes, the election is considered as conducted and the candidate who receives fifty percent plus one vote of the cast votes is elected president. If the first round does not identify the winner, then the first two candidates who received the highest amount of vote in the first round proceed to the second round for the run off. The candidate who received the majority of the votes is elected as president. According to the Constitution, the Constitutional Courts officially declares the presidential election results within fourteen days; and within the following three days, the elected president takes oath and officially takes over the position.

The Central Election Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan is the body ensures elections are organized. The commission is permanent government body which operates according to the 83rd, 101st, and 142nd articles of the Constitution. Including its president and vice president, it consists of totally eighteen members.

Republic of Kazakhstan

Constitutional Law of Republic of Kazakhstan regarding its independence took effect on December 16th, 1991.

According to the Constitution of 1995 election for the parliament with two chambers was conducted on December 9th, 1995 for the first time in the history of Republic of Kazakhstan. Ever since Parliament of Kazakhstan has consisted of two chambers – Senate and Majilis.

The current Majilis, MPs (Members of Parliament) of the 5th convocation, was formed as the result of elections conducted on January 15th, 2012. At that time, while seven parties participated in elections, only three parties passed the seven percent threshold. Nur Otan Party, again, acquired the majority of vote by eighty three percent rate; and totally gained eighty three of the overall hundred and seven membership

According to the second paragraph of the 97-1 article of the Kazakhstan Election Law, Majilis cannot be formed based on a single party. For example, in the next elections, representatives of other parties fail to clear the seven percent threshold, then the second coming party representatives will be given seats in the Majilis. For the Majilis of the 4th convocation was consisted of the representatives of one party only.

For the Majilis, ninety eight deputies are elected according to the proportional lists belong to the general national districts. The threshold is seven percent of the overall votes. Additionally, nine deputies are elected by the Kazakhstan's People's Assembly.

The Senate has forty seven members; two senators elected from each city (oblast), city of Almaty (which has Republican status) and Astana - the capital city of the Republic of Kazakhstan as it is prescribed by the Constitutional Law. Fifteen members of the Senate are directly assigned by the President by taking national-cultural and other interest of the society into consideration. The 50th article of the Constitution defines status and structure of the Parliament.

Thirty two senators that will be elected from cities, metropolitans and the capital city are selected by regional assemblies called "*Maslikhat*". Senators serve for six years. Accordingly, senators will be elected by deputies of *Maslikhats* that are elected directly by citizens in the direct local elections. Subject to the rule set by the Constitutional Law, after the passage of three years half of the Senators are elected (Constitution, Article 95)

Maslikhats are elected local representative councils. Members of *Maslikhats* are elected through secret polling based on general, fair and direct principle by the people for a five-year period. 86th article of the Constitution describes terms and conditions of electing and being elected.

Every citizen of Kazakhstan with graduate degree, who reached thirty years of age and who has at least five years of work experience, who has resided in a relevant region or cities of republican significance (Almaty or Astana) at least for three years can be elected as a senator. A citizen of the

Republic of Kazakhstan who has spent their last ten years in the country and reached 25 years of age can be elected as a member of Majilis (Constitution, Article 51).

Requirements for the presidential candidates are described in the 41st article of the Constitution. The president is elected by the eligible citizens of Republic of Kazakhstan through secret polling based on general, fair and direct election principle for five-year period. The candidate who receives more than fifty percent and plus one vote is considered as elected. In case none of the candidates receive required vote, the election goes into second round; and only two candidates who received the highest amount of vote in the first round can participate in this second round election. The candidate who received majority of votes is considered as elected.

The presidential election is conducted at the first Sunday of the December; and it cannot be conducted on the same day with the parliamentary election.

The elections to the Majilis are conducted two months prior to the termination of terms of the authority of the current parliament.

Election of half of the senators is carried out under the additional election regulation through voting procedure.

According to the 52nd article of the Constitution, preparation and conduct of elections at all levels are executed by the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The Central Election Commission is consisted of the chairman president, deputy chairman, the secretary and commission members. While the President of Kazakhstan appoints two members including the chairman of the board; the senate and the assembly appoint two members each as well.

The Constitutional Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Elections defines the principles of conducting elections in the country. Hence, election commissions provide budgets for candidates to conduct pre-election campaigns; and to finance introductory materials that will only be published in the domestic district media.

The Kyrgyz Republic

The Kyrgyz Republic gained its independence through adoption of Declaration of Independence on August 31st, 1991.

The first Constitution of Kyrgyzstan was adopted at the 12th meeting of the Supreme Council on May 5th, 1993; and the Kyrgyz Parliament from that time started to be called as ***Jogorku Kenesh***. While it was dual-chambered parliament between 1995 and 2005, it was structured as a single chamber parliament thereafter.

In elections of 1995 and 2000 members of parliament were elected based on majority principle. Lower chamber of the Parliament consisted of thirty five and upper chamber consisted of seventy members.

Through the Constitutional reform several amendments were introduced in 2003. Thus, Parliament was restructured as single chamber with ninety members; and elections were held based on party lists.

As the result of the referendum conducted on June 27th, 2010, according to the new Constitution, while authority and duties of the President was limited; the Parliament was put in prominence, and parliamentary system was strengthened.

General provisions about the elections are defined by the “Law concerning elections of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic and Deputies of the Jogorku Kenesh of Kyrgyz Republic.”

According to the new Constitution, adult citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic are eligible to vote. Elections are held free and fair. Elections for Presidency and members of Jogorku Kenesh, domestic administration, and representation bodies are conducted through secret polling relying on general, fair and direct election principles (Article 2).

Again, within the framework of the Constitution which describes citizenship rights in the 52nd article, it is said that “*citizens have rights to elect and being elected according to the regulations enshrined at the current Constitution and relevant laws concerning the government bodies and local administrative bodies.*”

60th and 62nd articles of the Constitution guarantees that an individual cannot be elected as president more than once. Presidential elections are held in every six years. Kyrgyz Citizens aged between 35 and 70, who resided in the country totally at least fifteen years and who speak state language, can be elected as President. To run for the presidency number of candidates cannot be limited. A candidate who is managed to collect signature of at least thirty thousand voters can be candidate for presidency.

Jogorku Kenesh is High Representative body, which has legislative functions and exerts control over the work of the government within the framework its authority. Within the Kyrgyzstan's parliamentary system Jogorku Kenesh consists of 120 deputies elected based on the proportional representation for five years.

According to the election results, a political party can be represented in the parliament with maximum sixty five chairs.

The constitutional law fully prescribes the principles of holding, including the election threshold, and composing the Jogorku Kenesh.

Any citizen of Kyrgyzstan aged 21 has right to cast a vote or get elected as a member of Jogorku Kenesh.

Additionally, before the last Presidential election there were certain amendments about political parties and election law.

Basic changes are as follows: while the election nation-wide election threshold increased from 7% to 10%, local election threshold for oblasts and cities of Bishkek and Osh remained as before 0.7%. About elections and referendum, the Central Election Commission is the body, which conducts and administers the election and referendum processes within the Kyrgyz Republic as it was described by the 101st article of the Constitution. The Commission is consisted of the chairman and twelve members. In forming the commission the gender balance is taken into account and it is indicated that either part cannot exceed seventy percent.

Concerning the members of the Election and Referendum Central Election Commission, one third of the members are assigned by the President of the country, another one third is assigned by the majority of the parliament, and the final one-third is assigned by Jogorku Kenesh based on the suggestions of the opposition in the Parliament for five years (Constitution, Article 74).

In terms of administrative purposes, Central Election Commission boards were distributed across the seven regions: Çuy, Issyk Kul, Naryn, Talas, Jalal-Abad, Osh and Batken (oblast). The Capital City Bishkek and Osh City were issued special status and they were taken outside of the Çuy and Osh States surrounding them.

Republic of Turkey

Elections are regulated according to the Constitution, Basic Provisions of Elections and Law of Voter Registry Boards (with 26.4.1961 date and 298 serial no) and Deputy Election Law (with 10.6.1983 date and 2839 serial no) and Political Parties Law (with 22.4.1983 date and 2820 serial no). Moreover, the Presidential Election Law with 19.01.2012 date and 6271 serial number regulates new president election system.

According to the second provision of the 67th article of the Constitution of 1982: "*Elections and referendum are conducted under the supervision of judiciary and auditing based on free, fair, secret polling, single-degree, general vote, open counting and pouring principles, jurisdiction management and auditing*"; according to sixth provision "*Election law is organized in a way to integrate justice in representation and stability in administration.*" In the seventh provision of the same article, the expression of "*Amendments made in the election laws cannot be applied to the elections that will be conducted within one year after they take in effect*" underlines importance of providing security, reliability and legitimacy of the election system.

According to 79th article of the Constitution, elections are conducted under general administration and auditing of the judicial bodies. Throughout the election process, Higher Election Committee (HEC) is held responsible for conducting all the processes or ensuring the reliability of them, carrying out investigation of alleged corruption cases, dealing with objections and various

allegations before, during and after elections, and adopts election minutes submitted by the members of the Turkish Grand National Assembly. No one has the right to object the decisions of the Higher Election Committee.

The HEC that undertakes all authority and responsibilities for execution of elections is consisted of seven permanent and four substitute members. Six of the members are appointed by the Supreme Court and five members are determined by the State Council for six years. City and County Election Boards are administered by judges. 79th article of the Constitution assumes that elections are carried out under administration and auditing of the juridical bodies. The HEC, its sub-boards, and members are consisted of judges. Furthermore, upon written consent is given by the general secretariats of parties that have group at the Turkish Grand National Assembly, four parties that have the highest vote in the latest general election can have one permanent and one substitute represent at the HEC. However, these representatives do not have voting power as regards the HEC decisions. Among the political parties with at least one member elected for one of the legislative assemblies in the latest general deputy election and by-election from their lists or determined and declared among political parties by the HEC because they fulfill requirements set by the regulations, that have organizations in city and county centers, can have one represent in the city and county election boards. These representatives do not have voting power but they participate in activities and meetings of election committees.

The HEC consists of eighty one City Election Committees, county election boards and Ballot Box Committees. Election boards are permanent. While the service period of the HEC is six years, City and county election boards replaced in every two years. Ballot Box Boards are established before every election; and they continue their duty until all processes regarding the election are completed. It is required that Ballot Box Boards are to be formed by the representatives of five political parties that acquired the highest amount of vote in the last general deputy election at a county.

After multi-party political life in Turkey commenced in 1946, there have been different election systems applied until today. 1946, 1950, 1954, 1957 deputy elections and 1961 Republic Senate Elections were conducted based on majority rule according to list method. Together with the adoption of the proportional representation system in Turkey, D'Hondt application of this system was preferred. This system was applied in a way with/without threshold. After this period, national balance system was applied only for 1965 Deputy Elections and 1966 Republic Senate Elections. Whereas 1961 Deputy Elections and 1964 Republic Senate Elections used D'Hondt with threshold in the election district; 1969, 1973, 1977 deputy elections and 1968, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1979 Republic Senate elections used D'Hondt without threshold; 1983 Deputy Election used D'Hondt with double threshold and finally 1987, 1991 deputy elections used D'Hondt with double threshold and quota systems as in election district and across the country. In the 1995, 1999, 2002, 2007 and 2011 deputy elections, D'Hondt system with country threshold was used. The election system currently applied for deputy election for the Turkish Grand National Assembly is D'Hondt system with country threshold based on the proportional representation principle.

Registration of voters into the election voter registry board is carried out through the population registry system directly. Citizens, who have reached eighteen years of age, are automatically included in the voter registry board. Voters use their votes in a district, where they are registered. Political parties have the right to obtain copies of voter lists.

With the 2014 Presidential Elections, for the first time Turkish Citizens residing outside of the homeland country have given voting right abroad. For citizens living abroad, voting opportunity in fifty four countries was provided. Until this time, Turkish citizens living abroad were only able to use their votes at the Ballot Boxes established at the border gates.

Turkey has single-assembly system. The Turkish Grand National Assembly consists of 550 members. Deputies are elected from the political party lists and among independent candidates and from the eighty-five election districts under the proportional representation election system for four years of duty.

Election threshold is determined as ten percent so as to maintain stability in administration. In order to be represented in the Turkish Grand National Assembly, political parties should pass ten

percent valid vote threshold across the country. The deputies are assigned according to the D'Hondt formula; deputies' certificates of election are distributed based on their rank in the party list. Independent candidates are not subject to country threshold application.

In order to participate in the general parliamentary election and by-election political parties are required to be organized at least in half of the cities in Turkey at the latest six months before the elections; and they should either organize their grand meeting or they should have a group in the Turkish Grand National Assembly. Moreover, political parties are required to declare full list for at least half of the cities.

Even though the President of the Republic of Turkey has been elected by the Turkish Grand National Assembly members until 2007; with a constitutional amendment approved by following referendum, a method in which the president is elected by simple majority of the valid votes given by citizens. Together with this amendment, while the president's service period was reduced from seven years to five, the single-period requirement was increased to two periods.

In order to be candidate for presidency, twenty deputies' support is required; and each deputy can support one candidate.

As specific applications to provide fair opportunities to candidate who would compete in the election, there are several regulations adopted such as laws concerning length of free propaganda on TV and radio, banning usage of government resources for propaganda purposes, and contribution of candidates into services financed by the public resources and taking part in their organization.

In the latest parliamentary election, political parties that received votes amounting to more than three percent are entitled to benefit from government funds.

In auditing of the election system in Turkey, political parties undertakes significant role. In order to ensure transparency in decisions and processes, political parties can have representatives in all boards responsible for execution of elections.

D) TURKPA Election Observation Activities

Election observation activities are democratization assistance tools that enable development of required conditions and trust level toward democratization processes so that elections can be conducted in countries in fair and transparent manner. Additionally, election observation activities make contribution in terms of observation and auditing processes before, during, and after election to prevent corruption that may occur.

The primary observation activities in the history were reported from the 19th century. According to the OSCE, the first election observation in the modern history was carried out in the Moldavia and Wallachia territory in the Ottoman Empire. Based on the 1856 Paris Resolution, under the observation of "European Commission" consisted of representatives of the countries, which signatories of the mentioned resolution, domestic assembly election was conducted in Moldavia and Wallachia territory in June 1857.

Concerning the recent history, until 1970s, there was not any international organization, which carried out election observation mission. Today elections across many countries around the world are held under the observation of international organisations, international and local non-government organizations and relevant reports are issued. For example, Organization of American States (OAS), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), European Union (EU), European Parliament (EP), Council of Europe (COE), Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), African Union (AU) and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) usually send regularly monitoring teams to elections. Beside these supra-national organizations, the non-government foundations such as National Endowment for Democracy (NED), International Republican Institute (IRI), National Democratic Institute (NDI) and Carter Center create work teams to join election observation process. Furthermore, election processes in number of countries are closely monitored by the election observation missions consisted of domestic non-governmental organizations as well.

Election is essential part of the national sovereignty. In spite of this fact, majority of developing countries open their election process toward foreign monitoring so as to prove that it is "fair and

transparent”. Existence of an independent election observation activity indicates that elections are transparent in terms of national and international public opinion. This is closely related with the process of embracement of democracy as a universal value.

Standards and rules concerning activities of the election observation missions were adopted and widely distributed. Number of organizations mentioned above have created a resource to implement an effective and professional observation mission. Additionally, reports of those institutions triggered certain harsh criticism. Some of them criticize observation missions of these organizations by alleging them to act in subjective and biased way.

Basic freedoms and political rights required for democratic elections are secured by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR (1948)) and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR (1966)). UDHR is accepted by all members of the United Nations and they reveal basic international standards. Moreover, majority of provisions have international law characteristic. The ICCPR has been signed and endorsed by more than 160 countries and has legally binding status on countries that executed this act.

Additionally, other universal human rights agreements specify additional standards for election processes ~~and identify more extensive areas where these elections are conducted~~. These standards are as following:

- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965),
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979),
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006).

TURKPA, as a recently established international structure in comparison to a number of international organizations, has been conducting election observation activities since 2010.

Up until today, TURKPA has observed member countries and issued election observation reports below:

- Turkey Presidential Election, August 10th, 2014;
- Azerbaijan Presidential Election, October 9th, 2013;
- Kazakhstan Parliament Majilis Early Elections, January 15th, 2012;
- Kyrgyzstan Presidential Election, October 30th, 2011;
- Turkey Parliamentary Elections, June 12th, 2011;
- Kazakhstan Presidential Early Election, April 3rd, 2011;
- Azerbaijan Parliamentary Elections, November 7th, 2010;
- Kyrgyzstan Parliamentary Elections, October 10th, 2010.

MPs from member countries and members of TURKPA Secretariat personnel participate in those observations of elections. Mentioned election observation activities are short-term; and they include compliance of election process with the legal framework, registration of voters, party and candidates, election campaigns, voting, counting and listing issues.

One of the basic targets of election observation mission is to develop and improve required criteria for elections. In this context the main purpose is to share information and experiences on several issues such as criteria for participating in elections and voting process and provision of technical support.

Persons participating in the election observation activities on behalf of TURKPA execute their duties in compliance with the principles that are considered and adopted by other international organizations and that conform to the code of election observation conduct. Essential principles are given below:

- Observers show respect to laws;
- Observers shall by all means maintain their objectivity while they are performing their duties; and they will never exhibit their individual opinions concerning controversial subjects about any political party, candidate or election process;

- Observers act in conformance together with other related members based on decisions taken jointly;
- Observers are required to cooperate with other election observation groups, if there is any;
- Observers carry accreditation identities with themselves and describe themselves with these credentials issued for them when it is necessary;
 - They neither carry nor wear any party symbol, colour or bill;
 - While they are executing their duties, they cannot intervene in any issue regarding election, voting, or vote counting process;
 - They can bring issues to attention of authorized officials concerning problems and troubles; but they cannot give order or directive to these officials;
 - Observers exhibit confirmable and real documents and evidences concerning all conclusions they draw; and keep registry of all voting places and other relevant places where they visit;
- Observers avoid making personal comments concerning their observation activities to media. However, they give general information about context of their activities as a group;
- Observers join post-election meetings held for reporting and they contribute reports that will be prepared for the election monitored;
- Observers apply all law and regulations. In cases when officials limit observation activities, they keep record of instances in which they are precluded.