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RELEASE NEWS

THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION / EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

United States Supports Exit Poll in Azerbaijan

July 25, 2005

The U.S. Embassy in Azerbaijan, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), will support a nationwide exit poll during the November Parliamentary elections. This is one of many activities that the United States government is undertaking to help Azerbaijan reach its goal of having free, fair, democratic elections this fall.

What is an exit poll?

An exit poll is one way of providing a check on actual voting numbers. An independent international organization will shortly be selected to conduct the poll in up to half of all precincts across the country.

On Election Day, poll-takers from this international organization will ask a random sample of voters who they voted for as they leave their polling places. These voters will be asked to fill out a brief questionnaire. The poll is anonymous, and poll-takers will ensure that no one can see a voter's responses. Such a poll provides an early indication of probable election winners, and serves as one indicator of possible election fraud.

Exit Polling Is Part of President Aliyev's Election Decree

The Azerbaijani government has repeatedly expressed a desire to have elections that will meet international democratic standards. This was reinforced by President Ilham Aliyev's Decree of May 11 on free and fair elections, which requires central and local executive authorities to create the necessary conditions for exit polls to be conducted in accordance with the Electoral Code of the Azerbaijani Republic, and not to intervene in the process.

Why is the United States government supporting an exit poll in Azerbaijan?

The exit poll is one of many U.S. government activities, including by USAID, specifically designed to help make the parliamentary elections satisfy the democratic expectations of the people of Azerbaijan, and meet international standards of free and fair elections.

Who will conduct the exit poll?

USAID is in the process of selecting an experienced international organization to design and conduct this exit poll, in cooperation with Azerbaijani organizations with professional experience in public opinion surveys and polls.

How will the people know about this exit poll?

The international organization selected to conduct the exit poll will prepare voter education and awareness materials prior to the parliamentary election to familiarize Azerbaijani voters with the purpose and value of exit polling in democratic societies. They will also explain the steps involved in conducting such a poll on Election Day.

Why is an exit poll honest?

Impartial, independent polltakers will be placed in many precincts throughout the country. They will stand outside polling stations and will randomly select voters throughout the day as they exit their polling stations after voting. Participation in the exit poll is voluntary and anonymous. Respondents will fill out the exit poll questionnaire privately. They will then put the completed form in a clearly marked "exit poll box" so they know that their identities cannot be tracked and their answers remain confidential.

Why is an exit poll helpful to Azerbaijan?

Azerbaijan wants to strengthen its democratic institutions and practices. One of the most important ways for that to happen is to have Parliamentary elections that meet international standards for free and fair elections. The results of the exit poll will hopefully confirm that the official vote counting is accurate. It will also help stop fraud and falsification, since a final vote count that falls outside the expected margin of error of the exit poll raises suspicion that the official vote count is inaccurate.

What role do the Azerbaijani people play in an exit poll?

Honest voter participation is critical to a credible election poll result. If approached by an exit poll taker on Election Day, Azerbaijani voters are urged to complete the anonymous survey and play their part in helping Azerbaijan meet international election standards and ultimately help their country become the vibrant democracy it wants to be.