PRESS RELEASE

UNPO Deploys Election Observation Mission to Abkhazia
Ahead of Presidential Elections on 26 August 2011

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Following an invitation from the Republic of Abkhazia, the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) has deployed an Election Observation Mission (EOM) in the run-up to forthcoming presidential elections. The elections have been called after the unexpected death of incumbent president, Sergei Bagapsh on 29 May 2011.

The international EOM team will be deployed in Abkhazia from 24 - 31 August 2011 as short-term observers (STOs) alongside other STO groups comprising approximately one hundred deputies and experts that are converging on the Black Sea de facto state from around the world. The presidential election comes two years after Sergei Bagapsh was elected in national polls and ahead of parliamentary elections scheduled for 2012.

Approximately 160,000 Abkhaz citizens are registered to vote but the official policies of non-recognition by organisations such as the Council of Europe, European Union, and Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, mean that none of these organizations will field election observation missions in the forthcoming presidential elections.

A report of the UNPO EOM’s findings will be released in the weeks following confirmation of the election result, but the EOM will issue a statement of its findings after the election. The EOM report will be based on observations taken from voting in approximately ten polling centres lying across Abkhazia’s seven districts and consultations with civil society, political parties and the media before and after polling day.

The UNPO EOM follows past fact-finding missions by the UNPO to Abkhazia in the 1990s and 2006 that provided updates to the international community on the situation facing the Abkhaz people at times of particularly heightened tension. The mission also builds on the UNPO’s democracy promotion programmes that have included EOM missions to Zanzibar, Assyrian areas of northern Iraq, Iraqi Kurdistan and diaspora voting for the Tibetan Central Administration in May 2011.

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