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**EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR DEMOCRACY THROUGH LAW**  
**(VENICE COMMISSION)**

**CONVENTION ON THE STANDARDS  
OF DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS, ELECTORAL RIGHTS  
AND FREEDOMS IN THE MEMBER STATES  
OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES**

# CONVENTION ON THE STANDARDS OF DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS, ELECTORAL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS IN THE MEMBER STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES<sup>1</sup>

(Kishinev, October 7, 2002)

The member states of this Convention (hereinafter referred to as "the Parties"), considering the aims and principles of the Charter of the Commonwealth of Independent States, reaffirming the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which establish that the will of the people as expressed in periodic and genuine elections shall be the basis of the authority of government, as well as the documents of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe and other international organizations on the conduct of free and fair elections,

Convinced that the recognition, observance and protection of human and civil rights and freedoms, the development and perfection of the democratic institutions of expression of the will of the people and the procedures for their realization in accordance with the universally accepted principles and norms of international law on the basis of the national constitution and legal acts are the purpose and obligation of a law-based state, one of the inalienable conditions for social stability and further strengthening of cooperation between the states in the name of the realization and protection of the ideals and principles which constitute their common democratic asset,

Wishing to facilitate the consolidation and improvement of the democratic systems of representative government, democratic traditions of expression of the will of the people in elections, realization of other forms of the power of the people based on the supremacy of law and maximum consideration for the national and historical traditions,

Convinced that elections are one of the political and legal instruments of a stable civil society and sustainable development of a state,

Recognizing the value of the national experience in the legal regulation of elections accumulated by the member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States, guarantees of the electoral rights and freedoms of a human being and citizen,

Determined to assure the combination of the universally accepted election standards and national norms for the regulation of elections, electoral rights and freedoms of a human being and citizen, as well as the guarantees for their realization and protection; implement the provisions of this Convention on the basis of the constitution and national laws and the appropriate state policy,

Wishing to lay down the guarantees for organization of public and international observation of elections in the member states of this Convention,

Have agreed as follows:

## Article 1 Standards of Democratic Elections

1. Democratic elections are one of the supreme direct expressions of the power and will of the people, the basis of elective bodies of state power and bodies of local self-government, other bodies of popular (national) representation, elective officials.

2. The Parties recognize that the election standards are the following: the right of a citizen to elect and be elected to bodies of state power and bodies of local self-government, other bodies of popular (national) representation; periodic and mandatory, fair, genuine, free elections based on universal, equal suffrage and held by secret ballot, which ensure free expression of the will of voters; open and public elections; judicial and other protection of electoral rights and freedoms of a human being and citizen; public and international observation of elections; guarantees for realization of electoral rights and freedoms of participants in the electoral process.

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<sup>1</sup> Convention on the Standards of Democratic Elections, Electoral Rights and Freedoms in the Member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States// *Scientific-Practical Commentary to the Federal Law "On Basic Guarantees of Electoral Rights and the Right of Citizens of the Russian Federation to Participate in a Referendum."* Moscow: Norma, 2003. P. 773.

2. Decisions of bodies of state power, bodies of local self-government, election bodies, which are adopted within the scope of their competence and relate to the calling, preparation and conduct of elections, assurance and protection of the electoral rights and freedoms of a citizen, shall be officially published or made known to the general public by other methods, in the procedure and within the period established by laws.

3. Legal acts and decisions affecting the electoral rights, freedoms and obligations of a citizen shall not be applicable unless they have been officially published for general information.

4. Within the period established by the election laws the election body shall officially publish the information about the voting returns and elected persons, in its organ or other media outlets.

5. Observance of the principle of open and public elections must ensure creation of legal conditions for public and international monitoring of elections.

## **Article 8 Free Elections**

1. The supremacy of the constitution shall be the basis for holding free elections and for making it possible for citizens and other participants in the electoral process to choose, without any influence, coercion, threat of coercion or any other unlawful inducement, whether to participate or not to participate in elections in the forms allowed by law and by lawful methods, without fear of any punishment or mistreatment regardless of voting returns and election results, as well as the basis for the legal and other guarantees of strict observance of the principle of free elections in the course of the entire electoral process.

2. Participation of a citizen in elections shall be free and voluntary. No one shall compel him to vote for or against any definite candidate (candidates), any definite list of candidates and no one shall compel him to participate or not to participate in elections or prevent him from freely expressing his will. No voters shall be compelled by anyone to declare how he intends to vote or has voted for a candidate (candidates), lists of candidates.

3. Candidates, political parties (coalitions) and other participants in the electoral process shall bear responsibility to the public and the state in accordance with the constitution and law. No candidate, no political party (coalition), no other public association or public organization shall use the methods of psychic, physical, religious compulsion or calls for violence or threats of violence or any other forms of coercion.

## **Article 9 Genuine Elections**

1. Genuine elections shall ensure determination of a freely expressed will of the people and its direct realization.

2. Genuine elections shall make it possible for voters to elect candidates on the basis of the constitution and laws. In genuine elections there is real political pluralism, ideological diversity and a multi-party system realized through the functioning of political parties whose lawful activity is under the legal protection of the state.

3. In genuine elections voters shall have free access to the information about candidates, lists of candidates, political parties (coalitions) electoral process, and candidates, political parties (coalitions) - to the mass information and telecommunications media.

4. Elections shall be prepared and conducted with the use of the official language or official languages of the state and, in cases and in the procedure provided by laws, also with the use of official languages of parts of the territory of the state, languages of peoples and nationalities, national minorities and ethnic groups on the territories of their compact settlement.

5. Elections shall be called and electoral actions and procedures carried out in the procedure and within the periods which allow candidates, political parties (coalitions) and other participants in the electoral process to organize a full-fledged election propaganda campaign.

6. In genuine elections equal and fair legal conditions shall be ensured for registration of candidates, lists of candidates and political parties (coalitions). Requirements to registration shall be clear and free from any conditions which may serve as a basis for discriminatory privileges or restrictions. Arbitrary or discriminatory use of the rules for registration of candidates, lists of candidates and political parties (coalitions) shall not be allowed.

7. Each candidate and each political party (coalition), participating in elections, shall accept the voting returns and results of democratic elections and shall have a possibility to appeal, in courts and/or

other bodies, voting returns and election results which violate the electoral rights and freedoms of a citizen, in the procedure and within the period established by laws, international obligations of the state.

8. Persons and bodies falsifying vote count, voting returns and election results, interfering with free realization by a citizen of his electoral rights and freedoms, including in the form of a boycott or calls for a boycott of elections, refusal to perform electoral procedures or electoral actions, shall be prosecutable under law.

## **Article 10 Fair Elections**

1. Observance of the principle of fair elections must ensure equal legal conditions to all participants in the electoral process.

2. Fair elections shall guarantee:

(a) universal and equal suffrage;

(b) equal possibilities for participation of each candidate or each political party (coalition) in an election campaign, including access to the mass information and telecommunications media;

(c) fair and public funding of elections, election campaigns of candidates, political parties (coalitions);

(d) honest voting and vote counting; rapid provision of full information about voting results and official publication of all election results;

(e) organization of the electoral process by impartial election bodies, working openly and publicly under effective public and international observation;

(f) prompt and effective adjudication of complaints about violation of electoral rights and freedoms of citizens, candidates, political parties (coalitions) to be performed by courts and other duly authorized bodies within the time frame of the appropriate stages of the electoral process, assurance of a citizen's right to apply to international judicial bodies for protection and restoration of his electoral rights and freedoms, in a procedure established by the norms of international law.

3. Candidates may be nominated by voters of the appropriate electoral district or may nominate themselves. Candidates and/or lists of candidates may be also nominated by political parties (coalitions), other public associations and other entities which have the right to nominate candidates and/or lists of candidates under the constitution, laws.

## **Article 11 Conduct of Elections by Election Bodies (Election Commissions)**

1. Preparation and conduct of elections, assurance and protection of electoral rights and freedoms of citizens and control over their observance shall be entrusted to election bodies (election commissions), with their status, competence and powers being established by the constitution, legislative acts.

2. No other structures (bodies, organizations) shall be formed or allowed to operate which supersede election bodies or perform, fully or partially, their functions, or obstruct or unlawfully interfere with their lawful activity, or appropriate their status and powers.

3. The procedure for the formation of election bodies, their powers, organization of their activity as well as the procedure, grounds, and time for dissolution of an election body or early termination of the powers of its member shall be established by law. The procedure and time of early termination of powers of members of an election body established by law and appointment by a duly authorized body of a new member of an election body to fill the vacancy shall not prevent the election body from exercising its powers, shall not affect the integrity of the electoral process, delay the performance of electoral actions, violate the electoral rights and freedoms of citizens.

4. The Parties admit that a candidate, a political party (coalition), which nominated a list of candidates, may be granted the right to appoint, in a procedure established by law, one non-voting member to the election body which registered the candidate (list of candidates) and to the lower election bodies for representing this candidate, political party (coalition).

5. A non-voting member of an election body may speak at meetings of the election bodies, make proposals on the questions within the scope of competence of the election body, ask that these questions be put to the vote, submit complaints against actions (omissions) of the election body to the higher election body or to a court, exercise other powers provided by law.

6. Decisions taken by election bodies within the scope of their competence shall be binding on the bodies of executive power, state institutions, bodies of local self-government, political parties and other public associations, their authorized representatives, organizations, officials, voters, lower election bodies, other persons and organizations indicated in laws.

7. The Parties shall, by their laws, impose an obligation on state bodies, bodies of local self-government, institutions, organizations and on their officials to assist election bodies in the exercise of their powers and shall oblige TV and radio companies and print media indicated in the election laws to provide, respectively, free air time and free space for information of voters about the election, progress of the election campaign.

## **Article 12**

### **Funding of Elections and Election Campaigns of Candidates, Political Parties (Coalitions)**

1. The activities connected with elections shall be funded from the budget.

2. In cases and in the procedure provided by the constitutions and laws the state shall, on a fair basis, allocate budget funds to candidates, political parties (coalitions), participating in elections, and shall allow formation of an extra-budgetary fund at an election body or formation of their own funds to finance their election campaigns, using for these purposes their own money and voluntary donations from natural persons and/or national legal entities, in the amount and in the procedure established by laws. The use by candidates, political parties (coalitions) of any sums of money other than those contributed to the said funds shall be prohibited by and punishable under laws.

3. All foreign donations, including those from foreign natural persons and legal entities, to candidates, political parties (coalitions), participating in elections, to any other public associations, public organizations, which are directly, indirectly or otherwise associated with a candidate, political party (coalition) or are under their direct influence or control and facilitate, or assist in, the implementation of the aims of a political party (coalition), shall not be allowed.

4. The Parties shall ensure openness and transparency of all monetary donations to candidates, political parties (coalitions), participating in elections, so as to exclude donations prohibited by law being made to candidates or to political parties (coalitions), which nominated candidates (lists of candidates) in elections.

5. Candidates, political parties (coalitions), participating in elections, shall, at the intervals established by law, submit to election bodies and other bodies, designated by law, the information and reports concerning receipt of all donations to their election funds, the donors, all expenditures made from these funds to finance their election campaign. Election bodies shall arrange for publication of such information and reports in the mass information and telecommunications media indicated in laws.

6. A special body (bodies) may be organized to control or oversee compliance with the rules and procedures for campaign funding of candidates, political parties (coalitions), or appropriate powers shall be vested in officials or election bodies.

7. A list of violations of the conditions and procedure for making donations, funding the activity of candidates, political parties (coalitions) as well as a list of measures to avert, prevent or stop infractions in election funding and funding of election campaigns of candidates, political parties (coalitions) shall be established by laws, other legal acts.

## **Article 13**

### **Informational Support of Elections and Election Campaigning by the State**

1. The Parties shall ensure the freedom of the search for, collection, dissemination of information about elections, candidates and impartial information coverage of elections in the mass information and telecommunications media.

2. The mass information and telecommunications media are called upon to keep the population informed about elections, nomination of candidates (list of candidates), their election programs (platforms), the progress of an election campaign, voting returns and election results, operating within the framework of the constitution, laws, international obligations of the state.

3. In accordance with law members of the press representing mass information and telecommunications media may:

(a) attend meetings of election bodies to ensure publicity and openness of their activity;

(b) examine documents and materials of election bodies relating to voting returns or election results, make copies of such documents and materials or receive such copies from the election body, pass them on to the mass information and telecommunications media for publication;

(c) attend public campaigning events and cover them in the mass media;

(d) be present at voting, vote counting, establishment of voting returns and election results.

4. Citizens, candidates, political parties (coalitions), which nominated a candidate and/or a list of candidates, other public associations, public organizations shall be guaranteed freedom of campaigning carried out in all forms allowed by law and by lawful methods, in the procedure and within periods established by laws, in the conditions of pluralism of opinions and absence of censorship.

5. In accordance with the constitution, laws all candidates, political parties (coalitions), participating in elections, shall have an equal opportunity of access to the mass information and telecommunications media, including such access for presenting their election program (platform).

6. In the course of election campaigning no abuse of the freedom of speech and freedom of mass information shall be allowed, including calls for a violent seizure of power, violent change of the constitutional system and violation of the territorial integrity of a state, warmongering, calls for terrorist or other violent acts inciting social, racial, national, ethnic, religious hatred and enmity.

7. The mass information and telecommunication media of any one member state of this Convention shall not be used for participation in the campaigning when elections are held in the territory of another state.

8. The list of violations of the conditions and procedure for campaigning carried out by candidates, political parties (coalitions) and infractions in the coverage of an election campaign by the mass media, which constitute grounds for bringing the violators to responsibility, shall be established by laws.

## **Article 14**

### **Status and Powers of National Observers**

1. Each candidate, each political party (coalition), other public associations (public organizations), each group of voters, other subjects of elections indicated in the constitution, laws may, in the procedure established by laws or by regulations of election bodies organizing the elections, appoint national observers who have the right to carry out observation on voting day, including the day of early voting, at polling stations.

2. The rights and obligations of national observers shall be defined by law.

3. National observers shall be granted the following rights:

(a) to examine election documents indicated in election laws; receive information about the number of voters on voter lists and the number of voters who took part in the voting, including early voting and voting outside the polling station;

(b) to be present at the polling station;

(c) to watch ballots being issued to voters;

(d) to be present at early voting, voting outside the polling station;

(e) to watch vote counting under conditions in which the ballot counting procedure is observable;

(f) to watch an election body drawing up protocols of voting returns and election results and other documents; examine the protocol of voting returns drawn up by an election body, including the redrafted protocol; receive certified copies of the said protocols from the election body in cases and in the procedure provided by the national laws;

(g) to make proposals and comments to an election body concerning organization of voting;

(h) to appeal decisions and actions (omissions) of an election body and its members to the next higher election body or to a court.

4. In cases and in the procedure provided by laws the rights of a national observer may also be granted to agents of candidates, political parties (coalitions).

5. Election bodies and/or other bodies and organizations may be authorized to organize education of national observers and other election participants in the fundamentals of democratic election technologies, national election laws, international election standards, assurance and protection of electoral rights and freedoms of a human being and citizen.

## **Article 15**

### **Status and Powers of International Observers**

1. The Parties reaffirm that the presence of international observers is conducive to openness and publicity of elections, observance of international obligations of states. They shall strive to promote access of international observers to electoral processes at levels lower than the national level, down to municipal (local) elections.

2. The activity of international observers shall be regulated by the laws of the country where they work, this Convention, other international documents.

3. International observers shall be granted visas to enter a state in the procedure established by law and, if they have an appropriate invitation, shall be accredited by the relevant election body. Invitations may be extended by bodies duly authorized to do so by law, after official publication of the decision to call the elections. Proposals to extend invitations may be made by the bodies of the Commonwealth of Independent States established under its Charter.

4. The central election body shall issue international observers with an accreditation card of an established form. Such card shall entitle an international observer to carry out observation during the period of preparation and conduct of elections.

5. In the territory of the state where they stay international observers shall be under the patronage of this state. Election bodies, bodies of state power, bodies of local self-government shall, within the scope of their competence, render them necessary assistance.

6. International observers shall carry on their activity by themselves and independently. The activity of international observers shall be technically and financially supported by the organization which sent them and/or at their own expense.

7. International observers shall not use their status to engage in any activity unrelated to monitoring of the election campaign. The Parties reserve the right to withdraw accreditation of international observers who violate laws, universally accepted principles and norms of international law.

8. International observers may:

(a) have access to all documents (except for documents which affect the interests of national security) regulating the electoral process; receive from election bodies necessary information and copies of the election documents indicated in national laws;

(b) establish contacts with political parties, coalitions, candidates, private persons, officials of election bodies;

(c) freely visit all election precincts and polling stations, including on voting day;

(d) observe the progress of voting, vote counting and determination of voting returns under conditions in which the ballot counting procedure is observable;

(e) acquaint themselves with the results of adjudication of complaints (applications) and grievances relating to violation of election laws;

(f) inform officials of election bodies about their observations and recommendations without interfering in the work of election bodies;

(g) publicize their opinion about the preparation and conduct of elections after the end of voting;

(h) present to election officials, bodies of state power and relevant officials their conclusions concerning the results of monitoring of the elections.

9. International observers shall:

(a) observe the constitution and laws of the country where they work, the provisions of this Convention and other international documents;

(b) carry the accreditation card of an international observer, issued in accordance with the procedure established by the country where they work, and produce it whenever requested by election officials;

(c) when performing their functions abide by such principles as political neutrality, impartiality, non-expression of any preferences or opinions with regard to election bodies, bodies of state power and other bodies, officials, participants in the electoral process;

(d) never interfere in the electoral process;

(e) base their conclusions and observations on factual material.

## **Article 16**

### **Complaints About, and Responsibility for, Violation of Electoral Rights and Freedoms of Citizens**

1. In the event of violation of the standards of democratic elections, electoral rights and freedoms of citizens, proclaimed in this Convention, and violation of election laws the injured person or persons shall have the right and possibility to complain about the violation to, and have the violated rights restored by, courts and, in cases and in the procedure provided by laws, election bodies.

2. Persons guilty of unlawful actions (omissions) shall bear responsibility in accordance with laws.

## **Article 17**

### **Electoral Documentation**

1. Ballots, other electoral documents, including documents of bodies of state power, bodies of local self-government, election bodies, relating to the conduct of elections shall be drawn up (published) in the official language of the state and official languages of the parts of the territory of the state where elections are held and, in the procedure established by law, in the languages of peoples and nationalities, national minorities and ethnic groups in the territories of their compact settlement.

2. Electoral documents used to determine voting returns and election results shall be treated as documents of strict accountability and their degree of protection shall be established by laws.

## **Article 18**

### **Measures Not to Be Considered Discriminatory**

1. The electoral rights and freedoms of a citizen set out above may be restricted by the constitution, laws without being considered discriminatory if they provide for:

(a) special measures taken to ensure an adequate representation of some part of a country's population, in particular, national minorities and ethnic groups, which, owing to political, economic, religious, social, historical and cultural conditions, are unable to enjoy the political and electoral rights and freedoms on an equitable basis with the rest of the population.

(b) restriction of the right to elect and be elected in respect of citizens pronounced to be incapable by a court, persons kept in places of confinement under a court sentence;

2. Restrictions on nomination of candidates and lists of candidates, creation and activity of political parties (coalitions), electoral rights and freedoms of citizens may be imposed in the interests of protection of the constitutional system, national security, maintenance of public order, protection of public well-being and morals, civil rights and freedoms. Such restrictions shall conform to the international obligations of a state.

3. In their wish to democratize the electoral process the Parties proceed from the fact that the existing restrictions on, or advantages with regard to, the realization of electoral rights and freedoms, which are provided by the constitution, laws and do not run counter to the international obligations of a state, shall be abolished as proper national conditions appear, so as to ensure that participants in the electoral process have equal legal conditions for participation in elections.

## **Article 19**

### **Obligations of Member States of the Convention**

1. The Parties shall take legislative and other measures to strengthen the guarantees of electoral rights and freedoms for the preparation and conduct of democratic elections and realization of the provisions of this Convention. The standards of democratic elections, electoral rights and freedoms, proclaimed in this Convention, may be guaranteed through their inclusion in the constitution, legislative acts.

2. The Parties undertake:

(a) to guarantee protection of the democratic principles and norms of the election laws, the democratic nature of elections, free expression by citizens of their will in elections, reasonable requirements to declaring elections to have taken place and be valid and legitimate;

(b) to take the necessary measures to ensure that the entire election legislation should be adopted by the national legislative body and that the legal standards for the conduct of elections should not be established by the acts of the bodies of executive power;



(c) to strive to ensure that deputy mandates of the other chamber of the national legislative body should be, fully or partially, an object of free competition of candidates and/or lists of candidates in the course of the direct general elections, in the procedure established by laws;

(d) to work for the creation of a system of legal, organizational, informational, guarantees of the electoral rights and freedoms of citizens in the preparation and conduct of elections of all levels; take necessary legislative measures to guarantee women fair and real possibilities, equal to those of men, for exercising the right to elect and be elected to elective bodies and elective offices, both personally and as members of political parties (coalitions) in accordance with the conditions and procedures established by the constitution, laws; create additional guarantees and conditions for participation in elections of persons with physical infirmities (disabled persons, etc.);

(e) to carry out registration of voters on the basis of a legislatively established non-discriminatory and effective procedure providing for such registration criteria as age, citizenship, residence, availability of the main document certifying the identity of a citizen;

(f) to establish legislatively the responsibility of persons, furnishing information about voters, for the accuracy, fullness and timely presentation of such information, for ensuring confidentiality of the personal data as prescribed by law;

(g) to facilitate formation of political parties and their free legitimate activity; legislatively regulate funding of political parties and the electoral process; ensure that the law and the national policy should provide for separation of party and state and that election campaigns should be conducted in the atmosphere of freedom and honesty allowing parties and candidates freely to present their political views and opinions, their election programs (platforms) and allowing voters to get acquainted with and discuss them and vote "for" or "against" freely, without any fear of punishment or any kind of persecution;

(h) to adopt measures guaranteeing impartial coverage of the election campaign by the mass media, including in the Internet, and making it impossible to erect legal and administrative barriers preventing political parties and candidates from gaining access to the mass media on a non-discriminatory basis; form a unified data bank of public polls connected with elections from which information must be available for examination or copying to participants in the electoral process and to international observers upon their request; introduce new information technologies, ensuring openness of elections and raising the trust of voters in voting returns and election results;

(i) to adopt national programs of civic education and participate in drafting and adoption of similar international programs; make arrangements for acquainting citizens and other election participants with, and educating them in, electoral procedures and rules, for raising their legal culture and for improving professional qualifications of election officials;

(j) to ensure creation of independent impartial election bodies, which organize the conduct of democratic, free, fair, genuine and periodic elections in accordance with laws and international obligations of the state;

(k) to ensure that candidates, who polled the required number of votes established by law, could properly assume office and remain in office until the period of their powers expires or their powers are terminated in some other manner regulated by law;

(l) to take legislative measures to regulate the list of violations of the electoral rights and freedoms of citizens, as well as the grounds and procedure for bringing to criminal, administrative and other responsibility the persons who use coercion, fraud, threats, forgery or other methods to prevent free exercise by a citizen of the right to elect and be elected, realization of other electoral rights and freedoms laid down by the constitutions and laws;

(m) to facilitate, for the exchange of information and joint use, the creation of a unified data bank containing information about national election laws, participants in the electoral process (with due regard the confidential nature of personal data), law enforcement and judicial practices, legislative proposals for the improvement of the election system, as well as other information relating to the organization of the electoral process;

(n) to promote cooperation between the election bodies of the member states of this Convention, including the creation and/or expansion of the powers of the existing inter-state associations of election bodies.

## **Article 20**

### **Rights Granted Irrespective of This Convention**

1. Nothing in this Convention shall prevent the states from the fulfillment of their international obligations relating to the electoral rights and freedoms of citizens, assumed under international treaties and agreements to which they are a party.

2. The exercise of the rights set out in this Convention shall not be detrimental to the realization of universally accepted human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons.

3. Nothing in this Convention may be construed as allowing any activity which runs counter to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

#### **Article 21**

#### **Status of the International Electoral Council**

The Parties recognize the need to establish an Inter-State Electoral Council on the basis of the election bodies of the member states of this Convention, which will be called upon to facilitate observation of elections in the member states of this Convention.

#### **Article 22**

#### **Entry into Force of the Convention**

1. This Convention shall enter into force at the date of the deposit of the third notice of the performance by the Parties of the internal state procedures required for its entry into force.

2. As regards the Parties depositing notice of the performance of such procedures subsequently the Convention shall enter into force at the date on which such notice is received by the depositary.

#### **Article 23**

#### **Accession to the Convention**

1. This Convention shall be open to accession for other states ready to assume obligations thereunder.

2. As regards any acceding state this Convention shall enter into force at the date of the deposit of the instrument of accession.

#### **Article 24**

#### **Withdrawal from the Convention**

Any Party may withdraw from this Convention by serving a notice of withdrawal on the depositary.

#### **Article 25**

#### **Modification and Amendment**

Modifications and amendments may be introduced in this Convention on the basis of a separate protocol which shall form an integral part of this Convention and shall enter into force in accordance with the procedure set out in Article 22 of this Convention.

#### **Article 26**

#### **Resolution of Disputes Arising From Application or Interpretation of the Convention**

The disputes arising from the application or interpretation of this Convention shall be resolved through consultations and negotiations between the interested Parties.

*Done at Kishinev, this 7th day of October, 2002, in the Russian language, in a single original. The original shall remain deposited at the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States, which shall transmit a certified copy to each of the signatory states.*

**For the Azerbaijan Republic**

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**For the Republic of Armenia**

**R. Kocharyan**

**For the Republic of Belarus**

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**For Georgia**

**E. Shevardnadze**

**For the Republic of Kazakhstan**

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**For the Kyrgyz Republic**

**A. Akaev**

**For the Republic of Moldova**

**V. Voronin**

**For the Russian Federation**

**V. Putin**

**For the Republic of Tajikistan**

**E. Rakhmonov**

**For Turkmenistan**

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**For the Republic of Uzbekistan**

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**For Ukraine**

**L. Kuchma**