

The following are some of the main new issues concerning political parties that are addressed in the draft Proclamation.

1) In addition to civil servants, who are prohibited from becoming members of a political party under Proclamation No. 573/2000, it was suggested that the police, security officials and personnel, and officials and employees of the Board be included in this prohibition.

2) With regards to the founding members of political parties, and with the aim of identifying those who are committed to running the party, the number of founding members of both national and regional parties has been increased. The process for verifying the signatures on endorsement forms for founding members of political parties and/or for individual candidates to ensure there is no fraud has been clarified. In addition, the consequences of engaging in fraudulent behavior have been clearly outlined.

3) Decisions have been made in order to minimize the obstacles that political party founding members face during the process of party registration, and the provisions under which the NEBE may issue a temporary registration document have been outlined.

4) Provisions that mandate internal democracy and accountability within a political party have been included, as have provisions that ensure the inclusion and participation of both genders in the membership and leadership of the party.

5) With regards to the Board's criteria for cancelling the registration of political parties, it has been ensured that the offenses and penalties will be proportional. In addition, provisions have been included that guarantee political parties the right to defend themselves against any complaint that has been made against them before a final decision is made.

6) With regards to governmental financial support for political parties, it has been established that political parties will receive an annual grant, the amount of which will be determined by the number of votes each party receives from federal and regional councils, the donations and gifts it receives from members and supporters, the number of women and persons with disabilities that represent it as candidates, and other relevant criteria. With regards to election observation, the restrictions imposed by Proclamation 532/99 have been amended. One such restriction is the provision where an organization that provided voter education cannot observe in that election. This provision was amended to allow an organization to provide voter education and also observe in the election, provided that the organization meets the requirements for participating in both activities. With regards to the electoral code of conduct, the ethical guidelines included in the law have been incorporated in accordance with consensus that were reached by political parties at their forums. Accordingly, the minimum list of ethical obligations, the role of stakeholders, the actions that are considered ethical violations, and the actions that can be taken by the Board and the court in the event of such violations are included in the draft proclamation. All parties who have complaints and grievances related to the election have the right to submit their case to the competent court if they have concerns about the

Board's subordinate arrangements or about the ruling they have received from the Board regarding their grievances. In addition, relevant electoral hearings have been set up at the federal and regional courts to respond to any electoral disputes that may occur during the electoral period. It has also been suggested that the judges presiding over these hearings be given proper training in advance, through collaboration by the courts and the NEBE.