

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly observes early parliamentary elections in Ukraine



Special Co-ordinator Ilkka Kanerva and Head of OSCEPA Delegation Sereine Mauborgne at a polling station in Kyiv, 21 July 2019

The OSCE PA wrapped up its election observation in Ukraine Monday, finding that fundamental rights and freedoms were overall respected and the campaign was competitive, despite numerous malpractices, particularly in the majoritarian races.

“Generally the Ukrainian elections were well administered. Persistent shortcomings need to be addressed by following up on previous recommendations by observation missions. It’s time for the political changes Ukrainian voters are hoping for,” said Ilkka Kanerva (Finland), Special Co-ordinator and leader of the OSCE short-term observer mission.

The parliamentary elections took place in the context of ongoing armed conflict and other hostilities in the east of Ukraine and the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula by the Russian Federation, which meant that voting could not take place in Crimea or the regions controlled by illegal armed groups. Some 35.6 million people were eligible to take part in the elections.

“I am extremely concerned by the de facto exclusion from

Sunday’s vote of over one million citizens without a registered address. We encourage authorities to undertake voter education efforts necessary for voters to request a change of voting address,” said Sereine Mauborgne (France), Head of the OSCE PA mission.

Observers also found that the campaign was marked by wide-spread vote-buying, misuse of incumbency, and the practice of exploiting all possible legislative loopholes, skewing equality of opportunity for contestants. Shortfalls were also noted in the area of media freedom. Intertwined business and political interests dictate media coverage of elections and allow for the misuse of political finance, including at the local level. The safety of journalists also remains a major concern.

The OSCE PA deployed 60 parliamentarians and staff, who observed in Kyiv, Lviv, Odesa, Kharkiv and Mariupol. The PA worked closely with colleagues from OSCE/ODIHR, whose mission was led by Albert Jónsson, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, and the European Parliament.

Humanitarian concerns in focus during third Committee Chair’s meetings in Southeast Ukraine

Following up on their report of 8 July 2019, the Chair of the General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions, Kyriakos Hadjiyianni (Cyprus) and former Chair Margareta Kiener Nellen (Switzerland) held a series of meetings on 22 July in Mariupol related to the humanitarian situation in the heavily conflict impacted region of southeast Ukraine.

In particular, they observed the crossing of the line of contact at the Pyschevyk entry-exit checkpoint, visited villages along the frontline with an OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) patrol and talked to the local population.

Later, they hosted a roundtable with human rights stakeholders active in the area, including international organizations, NGOs and local authorities, to discuss the most pressing humanitarian concerns.

Among topics raised, focus was conveyed inter alia to demining, the situation of IDPs, the militarization of villages and humanitarian assistance.

The parliamentarians welcomed the 21 July recommitment to the ceasefire and urged all sides to now maintain it stable and lasting.



Third committee chair Hadjiyianni and former chair Kiener Nellen patrolling villages along the line of contact with OSCE SMM, 22 July 2019

They also underlined the need for a concerted action of all humanitarian actors to prioritise the protection of lives. The visit was supported by Guido Almerigogna from the PA International Secretariat and by the OSCE SMM.