

News from Copenhagen

Georgia's presidential election: competitive, genuine choice, unlevel playing field

In a post-election statement delivered at a press conference in Tbilisi on Monday, observers said that Georgia's 28 October presidential election was competitive and professionally administered, but cited instances of the misuse of state resources and a substantial imbalance in donations as contributing to an unlevel playing field.

Candidates were able to campaign freely and voters had a genuine choice but the involvement of senior state officials from the ruling party in campaigning was not always in line with the law, the observers concluded. While the public broadcasters provided all candidates with a platform to present their views, the sharp polarization of the private media and a lack of analytical reporting, along with negative campaigning and harsh rhetoric by participants, limited voters' ability to make a fully informed choice, the observers said.

"In this election, Georgia showed the maturity of its democracy. This further raises expectations. Therefore, while praising the achievements, it is important to be aware of the shortcomings related to the campaign environment, finances and the legal environment in general," said Kristian Vigenin (Bulgaria), Special Co-ordinator and leader of the short-term OSCE observer mission. "We hope that the Georgian people will actively participate in the second round and that the outcome will fully reflect their will."

Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden), Head of the OSCE PA mission, said: "With yesterday's vote, Georgia proved that efforts are being made to improve its electoral process. I encourage all election stakeholders, and especially the media and civil society, to exercise the highest level of professional



ethics, particularly during the campaign for the second round. I would like to commend the Georgian people, and the youth in particular, for once more showing their great commitment to democracy."

While fundamental freedoms were generally respected and contestants were able to campaign freely, several campaign events were disrupted and some party offices or campaign materials were vandalized. The campaign was dominated by polarizing topics, negative campaigning and harsh accusations between the ruling and one of the opposition parties.

Concerns were raised about the collection of voters' personal data by the ruling party, and pressure associated with this practice was observed on election day.

The 56-member delegation from the OSCE PA worked closely with observers deployed by the OSCE/ODIHR, NATO PA, PACE, and the European Parliament. It was the 12th time since 1995 that the OSCE PA has sent an election observation mission to Georgia.

Allizard addresses Mediterranean Conference



Addressing the opening session of the 2018 OSCE Mediterranean Conference in Malaga on 25 October, OSCE PA Vice-President and Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs Pascal Allizard (France) discussed the link between energy security, stability and security. He informed the high-level audience, which included Spanish Foreign Minister Josep Borrell and Italian Deputy Foreign Minister Guglielmo Picchi, of the recent OSCE PA Mediterranean Forum held in early October in Bishkek on the theme of the "Geopolitics of Central Asia and the Mediterranean: Meeting the Challenges of Migration, Trade and the Environment."

Nothelle speaks at ODIHR Electoral Seminar



In an address to the OSCE/ODIHR's fourth annual Electoral Seminar, the OSCE PA's Special Representative in Vienna, Amb. Andreas Nothelle, spoke about the relationship between good elections and healthy democracy. He noted that OSCE commitments serve to re-empower the voter and re-install direct accountability of the elected to the citizens. The PA, he said, has underlined the importance of parliamentary election observation as essential for the development of democracy, as long as it is done as part of a systematic observation based on a sound and widely accepted methodology.

The seminar took place Tuesday in Vienna.