

## North Macedonia's elections competitive, although process remains insufficiently regulated: observers



Carina Ödebrink and Nikoloz Samkharadze speak to the media in Skopje, 8 May 2024

North Macedonia's presidential run-off and parliamentary elections were competitive and an extensive and pluralistic campaign helped voters to make an informed choice, but were marred by negative rhetoric with nationalistic slogans, as well as shortcomings in the legislation and insufficient oversight of cam-

aign finances, international observers said in a statement issued in Skopje on 9 May.

The statement was delivered by Head of the OSCE PA's Georgian Delegation Nikoloz Samkharadze, Special Co-ordinator and leader of the short-term observer mission. "Election day was calm and peaceful, proceeding in a constructive atmosphere, despite the strong political polarization and fragmentation in North Macedonia," Samkharadze said.

The elections took place against a background of voter dissatisfaction with the political establishment, and a general sense that both the government and opposition lacked the will to address long-standing calls for comprehensive reforms. The 74-member OSCE PA delegation was led by Carina Ödebrink (Sweden) and worked closely with OSCE/ODIHR, PACE, and the European Parliament.

## Special Representative Pritchard addresses the Arctic Circle Forum in Berlin



Mark Pritchard addresses Arctic Forum, Berlin, 8 May 2024

OSCE PA Vice-President and Special Representative on the Arctic and High North Rt. Hon. Mark Pritchard (United Kingdom) took part in the Arctic Circle Forum titled "The Arctic at Crossroads: Science - Climate - Policy - Europe," held on 7-8 May in Berlin. Organized by the Arctic Circle jointly with the

German Arctic Office, the Forum brought together more than 300 participants to discuss security, scientific and research findings, environmental concerns, and evolving policies pertinent to the Arctic and High North.

In his remarks, Special Representative Pritchard highlighted the potential for constructive dialogue in the Arctic and stressed the need for respect of international law, emphasizing the critical need to promote scientific co-operation and sustainable practices to safeguard the Arctic's future.

On the margins of the Forum, Pritchard exchange views with scientists and met with the Chairman of Arctic Circle Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson to discuss the UK engagement in the Arctic and the upcoming activities and priorities of the Arctic Circle.

## OSCE PA leaders discuss Georgian draft law on foreign influence with Prime Minister

On 9 May, OSCE PA President Pia Kauma (Finland), Special Representative on South Caucasus Kari Henriksen (Norway) and Secretary General Roberto Montella held an online meeting with the Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Kobakhidze, to discuss the Draft Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence currently being considered by the Georgian Parliament.

The Prime Minister said that the intent of the legislation is to promote transparency and assured the PA leaders that there is no attempt to restrict activities of any NGOs. Special Representative Henriksen stressed the need to ensure that groups and individuals are not stigmatized and President Kauma urged Prime Minister Kobakhidze to utilize ODIHR to review the



current draft law. The Prime Minister noted that the legislation is currently being reviewed by the Venice Commission. He also expressed his willingness to consider assistance by ODIHR on this issue.

## Members of Assembly's Nordic-Baltic group visit International Secretariat

OSCE PA members from the Nordic-Baltic countries visited the International Secretariat on Tuesday. Meeting with OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella and other staff members, the delegation heard about the ongoing preparations for the 31st Annual Session, which will take place from 29

June to 3 July in Bucharest, as well as other activities. Secretary General Montella briefed the parliamentarians on the Assembly's ongoing work and described a number of issues facing the OSCE, and the role that parliamentarians can play in strengthening the organization.

## Special Representative Karimi highlights PA election observation at HDC meeting

At Tuesday's OSCE Human Dimension Committee Meeting in Vienna, Farah Karimi – Head of the Delegation of the Netherlands to the OSCE PA Special Representative on Central Asia – emphasized the role of parliamentarians in improving electoral processes in the OSCE area through election observation and inclusive reform.

"Through election observation we aim to demonstrate and

reconfirm our belief, as well as our commitment, to uphold strong democratic institutions and the rule of law," said Special Representative Karimi.

Karimi further highlighted that election observation is now more important than ever, as the OSCE region is facing a concerning rise of authoritarianism, and that a harmonized approach within the organization remains crucial.