

International Observers condemn Ukrainian Presidential Elections

“*The second round of the Ukrainian Presidential elections on 21 November did not meet a considerable number of OSCE commitments, Council of Europe and other European Standards for democratic elections*”, concluded Mr. Bruce George (UK), President Emeritus of the OSCE PA, who was appointed by PA President Alcee L. Hastings and Chairman-in-Office, Solomon Passy to lead the OSCE Election Observation. Mr. George made this statement at a press conference in Kiev on 22 November on behalf of the International Election Observation Mission (IEOM), which was composed of the OSCE PA, Council of Europe PA, European Parliament, NATO PA and the ODIHR.

Mr. George reminded his audience that three weeks ago the IEOM had appealed to the Ukrainian authorities to use the interim three weeks between the two rounds of elections to improve on the shortcomings of the first round. “*Today I announce that it is with an even heavier heart that we have to conclude that the authorities did not respond positively to our appeal.*”

The IEOM preliminary statement lists a number of significant shortcomings. They include the abuse of state resources in favour of the incumbent Prime Minister, demonstrating a widespread disregard for the fundamental distinction between the State and partisan political interests. The IEOM had also received



reports that some citizens, whose livelihood depends directly or indirectly upon the State, were placed under duress to acquire and hand over to their superiors an absentee voting certificate. These documents were collected in the workplaces on an organized basis, thus preventing these citizens from exercising their suffrage rights. The collection of absentee voting certificates also made it possible to misuse these documents.

The IEOM statement also refers to the bias in the State controlled media and inaccuracies in the voter lists.

In addition, the IEOM statement refers to a number of encouraging aspects of the electoral process. It was noted that citizens in many regions seemed more confident in exercising their basic right of free expression and that a large number of journalists had openly protested against effective censorship.

The IEOM also took note of the improved proceedings and transparency of the Supreme Court.

Some 70 representatives of the four Parliamentary institutions participated in the observation of the second round. The OSCE PA Delegation included 30 members from 15 OSCE participating States and was accompanied by Deputy Secretary General Pentti Väänänen and Programme Officer Paul LeGendre.

