

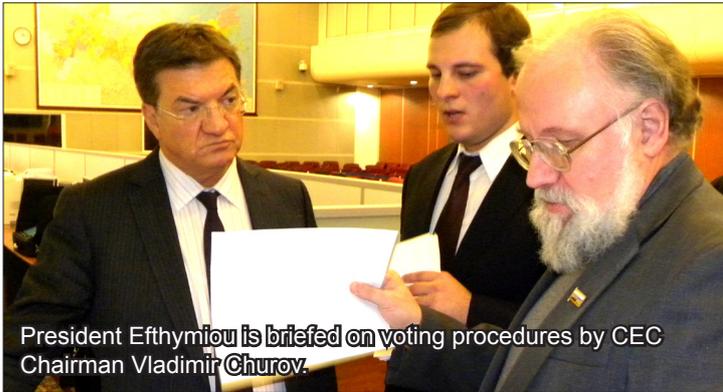
News from Copenhagen

OSCE PA

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OSCE PA continues election observation in Russian Federation



President Efsthymiou is briefed on voting procedures by CEC Chairman Vladimir Churov.

OSCE PA President Petros Efsthymiou has completed a two-day visit to Moscow during which he held constructive and fruitful discussions regarding the forthcoming observation of the Russian parliamentary elections to take place on 4 December. He met with Chairman of the Central Election Commission Vladimir Churov, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, Speaker of the Council of Federation Valentina Matviyenko, Speaker of the State Duma Boris Gryzlov, as well as with other interested parties and NGOs.

The OSCE PA has led every OSCE observation mission to parliamentary elections in Russia since 1993 on the basis of the provisions of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document. In 2007, when the OSCE/ODIHR chose not to observe, the OSCE PA and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe jointly conducted a full observation mission, led by OSCE PA President Goran Lennmarker.

In meetings with various interlocutors, President Efsthymiou stressed that the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has played a leading role in election observation throughout the OSCE area for nearly 20 years. "Observation is one important tool that the Organization uses to help participating States strengthen democracy by improving their electoral processes and living up to their OSCE commitments. Parliamentarians provide unmatched credibility to OSCE's efforts in election observation, because they themselves are practitioners of politics and elections," he said.

Assuring interlocutors that the OSCE PA will deliver a fair and impartial assessment of the elections based on the facts, President Efsthymiou also expressed his regret that Russia has set limitations on the number of ODIHR long- and short-term observers which, he pointed out, undermines the integrity of their observation effort. The OSCE PA observation mission will work in close co-operation with the ODIHR, whose 160 short-term observers will also be under the leadership of President Efsthymiou as the Special OSCE Co-ordinator appointed by Chairman-in-Office Audronius Azubalis.

The President received assurances from CEC Chairman Churov that there would be no restrictions on the activity of OSCE PA observers. Churov also expressed readiness of the



President Efsthymiou with Speaker Valentina Matviyenko.

Central Election Commission to provide all necessary assistance to the OSCE PA observation mission in fulfillment of its objectives during the parliamentary elections in December. Foreign Minister Lavrov, Speaker of the Duma Gryzlov, and President of the Council of Federation Matviyenko all promised support and assistance for the OSCE PA observation mission.

While in Moscow, President Efsthymiou met with representatives of civil society, as well as with PARNAS, the opposition party whose registration was refused by the Ministry of Justice based on arbitrary findings of minor, technical flaws in their registration papers.

In Moscow, the President was accompanied by OSCE PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver and Senior Counsellor Semyon Dzakhayev, who began the OSCE PA's election observation in a previous visit to the CEC last June.

In addition to the preparations underway for the observation of the Russian parliamentary elections, the OSCE PA has also opened an election observation mission in Tunisia in preparation for the 23 October elections to the National Constituent Assembly and is preparing a full election observation mission to the 30 October presidential election in the Kyrgyz Republic. Those missions are being led by OSCE PA Vice-Presidents Riccardo Migliori and Walburga Habsburg Douglas, respectively.



President Efsthymiou meeting with Konstantin Merzlikin and Oleg Buklemishev of PARNAS.