

Ukraine's presidential election meets most international commitments

KYIV, 18 January 2010 – The first round of Ukraine's presidential election was of high quality and showed significant progress over previous elections, meeting most international commitments, concluded the international election observation mission in a statement published today.

The observers noted that the election demonstrated respect for civil and political rights, and offered voters a genuine choice between candidates representing diverse political views. Candidates were able to campaign freely, and the campaign period was generally calm and orderly.

The legal framework remained unclear and incomplete, and was subject of permanent discussion. Nevertheless, the election was generally administered efficiently, and commissions mostly worked in a collegial and non-partisan manner. A pluralistic media offered voters a variety of information about candidates, although electronic media reporting was often influenced by candidates paying for news coverage.

Voting and counting on election day was assessed overwhelmingly positive by observers.

"This was a good and competitive election and very promising for the future of Ukraine's democracy. I look forward to the continuation of this positive experience in the second round of the election," said João Soares, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and Special Co-ordinator of the OSCE short-term observers.

"Ukraine has proven that it can hold a clean election, even under an incomplete and unclear election law, confirming the desire of the Ukrainian people to freely choose their leaders. A major challenge ahead for Ukraine's politicians is to play *by* the rules rather than *with* the rules," said Matyas Eörsi, Head of the delegation of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly.

"These elections consolidated the progress achieved by Ukraine since 2004. We were impressed with the overwhelmingly orderly process conducted in polling stations across the country on election day. Shortcomings remain, particularly with regard to the electoral legal framework and its implementation. This undermines public confidence. Still, the Ukrainian voters won these elections. They have once more demonstrated their strong commitment to freedom and democracy," said Assen Agov, Head of the delegation of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

"The people of Ukraine had a genuine democratic choice between a large number of candidates. Open access to information about the candidates and their programmes

allowed the Ukrainian voters to make a well-founded choice. Looking back to the last presidential elections, democratic standards and mechanisms have made a great step ahead and have stabilized democracy in Ukraine.” said Pawel Kowal, Head of the delegation of the European Parliament.

“This election was organized overall efficiently and with respect for fundamental freedoms, despite challenges such as an incomplete and inconsistent legal framework. We commend the tireless efforts of countless election workers to ensure a smooth functioning of the electoral process.” said Heidi Tagliavini, Head of the election observation mission of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

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