

## PRESS RELEASE

# Elections in Moldova were generally well administered, in a campaign influenced by geopolitical aspirations, say international observers

CHISINAU, 1 December 2014 – The 30 November parliamentary elections were characterized by a wide choice of political alternatives and were generally well administered, although the deregistration of one electoral contestant shortly before election day raised questions about the timing and circumstances, international election observers said in a statement issued today. While contestants enjoyed unimpeded access to the media, political influence in broadcast media led to partisan reporting.

“A largely well-run election offered voters the opportunity to choose their preferred candidates and even geopolitical aspirations, which was at the heart of the campaign,” said Emin Onen, Special Co-ordinator and leader of the short-term OSCE observer mission. “That said, the late removal of a highly visible party from the ballot cast a shadow over the final days.”

Against the backdrop of the country’s geopolitical aspirations, candidates were able to compete in a peaceful campaign and fundamental freedoms were generally respected, the statement said. Changes made to candidate lists up to a week before the elections meant that some potential candidates continued working in official government capacities throughout the campaign, thus blurring the distinction between public office and campaign activities. Observers noted a limited number of campaign violations, mostly related to unequal access to public venues.

“Yesterday the citizens of Moldova voted in a free and dignified manner. The newly elected parliament should immediately begin implementing long-awaited reforms in order to resolve socio-economic issues, tackle corruption, and adopt laws on electoral campaign and party financing, in particular to ensure transparency of sources of funding. The application of the law should be fair and justice should never be selective,” said followed by Jean-Claude Mignon, Head of the PACE delegation. “The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, its monitoring mechanisms, the Venice Commission and the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) stand ready to assist the Moldovan authorities in carrying out reforms.”

The election administration was generally professional and transparent and enjoyed the confidence of most stakeholders. In particular, the new electronic system for voter registration marked a positive development, although its introduction faced challenges related to procedures and infrastructure, while the processing of voters’ data on election day experienced technical deficiencies.

Arta Dade, Head of the OSCE PA delegation, said: “Thousands of people worked hard to make yesterday’s election come together, and I applaud the efforts of the polling station workers. The failure for several hours yesterday of the electronic voter’s register was an unfortunate glitch to an otherwise smoothly run election day. The effective work particularly

by women in running the elections yesterday is a sign that women can play a larger role in parliament and governing.”

“Within the context of a divided political environment, the elections were competently and professionally administered,” said Ambassador Jan Petersen, Head of the OSCE/ODIHR long-term election observation mission. “Nevertheless, there is still room for improvement, such as with regards to the legal framework, to ensure that future election campaigns create an equitable environment for all contestants.”

While the legal framework is generally adequate for the conduct of democratic elections, ambiguities and vague provisions undermined the consistent application of the law. In particular, issues remain concerning the transparency, oversight and enforcement of campaign finance regulations. In addition, the legal framework lacks measures to promote the participation of women and minorities, who were placed in generally unwinnable positions on candidate lists.

Media coverage of the campaign presented voters with a diverse range of views. Media independence remained a problem, however, and the concentration of media ownership and political influence affected editorial freedom and investigative reporting. With a few notable exceptions including the public broadcaster, balanced campaign coverage was limited. Nevertheless, national broadcasters complied with their obligations to provide free airtime and organize debates.

Election day generally proceeded in an orderly manner, despite considerable technical difficulties in processing voter data, affecting the voting and counting processes, and one fifth of precinct commissions had difficulties in processing the results electronically. Contestant and citizen group observers were present in almost all polling stations and tabulation centres observed.

“We took note of the progress that has been made, but also of observed shortcomings, including those already highlighted in the European Parliament resolution on Moldova of 13 November. In particular, we stressed the importance of adopting effective legislation on party financing and media freedom and plurality, with a particular emphasis on transparency of media ownership,” said Igor Šoltes, Head of the EP delegation. “Let me reiterate that the European Parliament looks forward to working together with the new Moldovan parliament, and will follow closely the swift implementation of the new Association Agreement,” he added.

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