

# News from Copenhagen

## OSCE: free and fair elections in Ukraine



Delivering the preliminary statement of the International Election Observation Mission to the March 26 Ukrainian parliamentary elections, Alcee L. Hastings reported that the elections consolidated the democratic breakthrough that began less than a year and a half ago. President Hastings, appointed to lead the observation mission by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Belgian Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht, announced the assessment in a press conference in Kyiv on March 27.

“These elections can only be described as free and fair, and so it is the Ukrainian people who are the real winners,” reported Hastings. He applauded the hard work of election officials in overcoming technical difficulties caused by the simultaneous holding of parliamentary and local elections, which had slowed the voting and counting process. The

mission reported that voters were able to make informed choices between distinct alternatives and to freely and fairly express their will. Comprehensive media coverage allowed a competitive and dynamic campaign.

In delivering the preliminary statement, President Hastings was joined by parliamentarians from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament, as well as the On-site Co-ordinator of the OSCE/ODIHR observation mission in Ukraine. President Hastings appointed Joao Soares, Head of the Portuguese delegation to the OSCE PA as his deputy to lead the delegation of 100 OSCE PA parliamentarians and staff in Ukraine. The polling stations were also observed by over 291 000 representatives of domestic political parties.



President Hastings led the IEOM delegation which deployed over 900 observers, including 200 members of parliaments, from 45 OSCE participating States



The President of the Belgian Senate, Anne-Marie Lizin, met with Austrian Federal President Heinz Fischer on March 28 to discuss her work as OSCE PA Special Representative on Guantanamo.