

OSCE PA preparing Election Observation Mission to Ukraine

A total of 136 parliamentarians and staff from 32 OSCE countries are scheduled to participate in the OSCE election observation mission to Ukraine, comprising the PA and ODIHR, for the 17 January presidential election.

A second round of the presidential election will be held on 7 February, in case no candidate receives over 50 per cent of the votes in the first round.

On Sunday, 10 January, OSCE PA President Joao Soares begins his pre-election visit to Ukraine in preparation for the election. Mr. Soares, who also conducted a pre-election visit to Ukraine in November last year, will travel to Odessa and other cities outside of Kyiv, before participating in the ODIHR briefings of all OSCE observers.

President Soares has appointed six experienced election observers as heads of the regional parliamentary observation teams for the election. They are: Alcee Hastings (USA) in Kyiv, Wolfgang Grossruck (Austria) in Lviv, Tone Tingsgaard (Sweden) in Donetsk, Riccardo Migliori (Italy) in Sevastopol, Canan Kalsin (Turkey) in Kharkiv, and François-Xavier De Donnea (Belgium) in Odessa.

Mr. Soares, who will lead the Assembly's observation mission, has also been appointed Special Co-ordinator by the OSCE Chair-in-Office. In this role, Mr. Soares will lead all OSCE short-term observers and deliver the preliminary post-election statement on behalf of the OSCE at a press conference in Kyiv on the day after the election together with the parliamentary assemblies from the Council of Europe and NATO, as well as the European Parliament.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly started to prepare for the election in October, with substantive research being conducted by its International Secretariat in Copenhagen. The OSCE PA observed Ukraine's presidential election in 2004 and its parliamentary elections in 2007.

OSCE PA themes for 2010

As the OSCE PA gets ready for a new year full of activities, the themes for the 2010 Assembly meetings range from Afghanistan to transnational crime and corruption.

At the Winter Meeting in Vienna, 18-19 February, a special debate on "The situation in Afghanistan" will be held. A Trans-Asian Parliamentary Forum will be held in Almaty in Kazakhstan 14-16 May with the theme, "The OSCE Eurasian Dimension."

The Annual Session in Oslo 6-10 July will have the theme, "Rule of Law: Combating Transnational Crime and Corruption," while a special theme of the Fall Meetings in Palermo from 8 to 10 October will be "Fighting Organized International Crime and Corruption."

Working Group on Belarus visits Minsk



The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Working Group on Belarus paid a visit to Minsk 20-22 December. The delegation, which included Pawel Pencyljusz, (Poland), Claudio D'Amico (Italy) and OSCE PA Programme Officer Anna Chernova, was led by Cecilia Wigstrom (Sweden).

Members of the Working Group met with the Delegation of Belarus to the OSCE PA, the OSCE Office in Minsk, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Central Election Commission, and representatives of civil society and media, as well as a wide range of political forces in Belarus.

In their meetings, Members of the Group noted the active participation of the Belarusian parliamentarians in the OSCE, and encouraged the Belarusian authorities to further dialogue with OSCE institutions, including the Office in Minsk. In meetings with election officials, as well as with parliamentarians, political party representatives and civil society, the Group discussed the new election legislation amendments and follow-up to recommendations made by recent OSCE Election Observation Missions.

"We appreciate the intensified dialogue with OSCE and other institutions with regard to democratic reforms in Belarus, however we note that there is much work to be done," Ms. Wigstrom said. "We are particularly concerned about freedom of association and media, and the possibility of political parties and civil society to fully participate in the political life of the country."

The OSCE PA Delegation welcomed the ongoing co-operation with the Belarusian Delegation to the OSCE PA, and plans to organize the next in a series of joint parliamentary seminars in Minsk in March 2010.

The OSCE PA Working Group on Belarus is tasked with facilitating dialogue between the Government and opposition of Belarus, aiming to promote free and fair election processes and aid in the development of democracy. The Working Group is Chaired by Uta Zapf, Germany and includes MPs from six OSCE participating States.