

News from Copenhagen

OSCE PA observes historic elections in Tunisia



Riccardo Migliori speaks to the press at the Independent High Authority for the Elections (ISIE) in Tunis.



Migliori and Spencer Oliver in Sidi Bouzid, meters from where Mohamed Bouazizi self-immolated, sparking the Arab Spring.

International election observers from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly on Monday declared the first democratic elections in Tunisia as “free and fair” and praised the Tunisian people for their participation in the electoral process.

“The elections laid a first solid cornerstone for future democratic institution-building,” said Riccardo Migliori (Italy), who headed the observation mission. “In this early phase of democratic transition, only months after violent protests, we saw genuinely free elections. My colleagues and I could not witness any widespread or systematic irregularities.”

Observers said the campaign for the Constituent National Assembly was marked by fair media coverage, giving voters a chance to make a genuine choice from the large number of party lists that included more than 11,000 candidates. Election day voting was seen as calm and orderly and the counting of votes generally viewed as honest.

Observers did cite restrictive policies on public advertising, the exclusion of followers of the authoritarian regime from the elections, and an imperfect voter registration system as issues that need to be addressed to ensure Tunisia’s compliance with international obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as well as national legislation.

“These elections demonstrated the will of the Tunisian people to send out a clear and promising signal that the country is on its way to guaranteeing freedom, human rights, and a democratic rule based on good governance and controlled by an independent judiciary,” said Migliori.

More than 80 OSCE PA observers from 21 OSCE participating States and Algeria observed voting in Djerba, Gafsa, Hammamet, Kairouan, Nabeul, Sidi Bouzid, Sousse, Tozeur, and Tunis. Tunisia is a Partner for Co-operation of the OSCE.

Vice-President Migliori conducted two pre-election visits to Tunisia as Head of the OSCE PA election observation mission. On a pre-election visit to Tunis from 6 to 9 September he met with national authorities, leaders of political parties, members of civil society and representatives of international organizations working in Tunis.

He paid a second visit to the country from 28 September to 1 October. Following a recommendation of the Tunisian electoral authorities, Migliori visited the southern part of the country to get a direct impression of the preparation for the elections and to assess the socio-political climate during the election campaign in rural areas of Tunisia. Vice-President Migliori visited Sousse, Sfax, Gabes, and Medenine, meeting with electoral authorities, leaders and candidates of the major political parties contesting the elections, and representatives of the international observers present in these municipalities.

The OSCE PA election observation mission was supported by Deputy Director for Field Operations Roberto Montella, Special Representative Amb. Andreas Nothelle and Research Fellow Christian Pauzenberger from the OSCE PA Liaison Office in Vienna, and Secretary General Spencer Oliver and Research Fellow Kamiel Mesie from the International Secretariat in Copenhagen.



Parliamentarians participate in a pre-election briefing in Tunis.