

# News from Copenhagen

OSCE PA

Number 556 Current Information from the OSCE PA International Secretariat

4 March 2015

## Tidei and Bekkevold lead election observation in Tajikistan



Marietta Tidei (left) and Geir Joergen Bekkevold speak to the media at a polling station in Dushanbe, 1 March 2015.



Geir Joergen Bekkevold and Marietta Tidei examine a ballot box at a polling station in Dushanbe, 1 March 2015.

Delivering the post-election statement on behalf of the OSCE at a press conference in Dushanbe on 2 March, Marietta Tidei, the Special Co-ordinator and leader of the short-term OSCE observer mission, noted that while some electoral contestants provided political alternatives, the 1 March parliamentary elections in Tajikistan took place in a restricted political space and failed to provide a level playing field for candidates.

“Engagement by various political forces in this campaign was, unfortunately, not enough to result in truly competitive elections. Uneven treatment by the authorities and remaining legal restrictions limited the space for debate on the real problems facing Tajikistan,” said Tidei (MP, Italy). “The voters, many of whom I was pleased to speak with yesterday, deserve more genuine discussion about the future of their country.”

“While we have noted some improvements, for example in the election law, the advantages of incumbency were still misused. Greater equal treatment in law and in fact for all political forces is required for Tajikistan to live up to its democratic commitments,” said Geir Joergen Bekkevold (MP, Norway), Head of the OSCE PA delegation. “I was pleased to see that some choice existed for voters, and hope that in the future there will be more space for a vibrant campaign.”

Despite the existence of some political choice, the campaign

took place in a controlled environment, as regulations limited the possibilities for candidates to campaign. The distinction between the state and the ruling People’s Democratic Party was often blurred in the campaign.

The imbalanced coverage by state media, negative reporting on the opposition Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan, and the absence of genuine political debate considerably limited the opportunity for voters to make an informed choice, the statement says. The state-owned media outlets – the only broadcast outlets with nationwide coverage – focused overwhelmingly on the activities of state authorities, and not on contestants’ campaigns.

On election day, 230 observers from 40 countries were deployed, including a 58-member delegation from the OSCE PA, a nine-member delegation from the European Parliament, and 163 long-term and short-term observers deployed by the OSCE/ODIHR.

The PA’s mission was co-ordinated by Director of Elections Andreas Baker, Programme Officers Maria Chepurina and Loic Poulain, and Operations Officer Iryna Sabashuk. Special Co-ordinator Tidei serves as Rapporteur of the OSCE PA’s Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment. OSCE PA Head of Delegation Bekkevold serves as the Head of Norway’s Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

## Preparatory visit to Georgia for OSCE PA’s 2016 Annual Session



Gustavo Pallares, Odile Lelarge and Semyon Dzakhayev discuss logistics with Mary Gogoladze of the Georgian Parliament in Tbilisi, 4 March 2015.

Representatives from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly’s International Secretariat are visiting Georgia this week in a preparatory visit for the Assembly’s 2016 Annual Session to be held in Tbilisi, the Georgian capital.

Deputy Secretaries General Gustavo Pallares and Semyon Dzakhayev and Conference Co-ordinator Odile Lelarge met

on 3-4 March with Georgian representatives to begin initial preparations, including developing the programme, preparing the venue, identifying hotels for delegates and all other logistical aspects involved.

The Secretariat team has met with members of Georgian OSCE PA Delegation, representatives of the Foreign Ministry in charge of consular affairs regarding the issuing of visas, and visited the site of the Annual Session, the Expo Georgia Convention Centre. The assessment of the team is that the facilities are satisfactory and that Tbilisi will provide an excellent venue for the Annual Session.

Hosted by the Parliament of Georgia, the Assembly’s 25th Annual Session will take place in Tbilisi on 6-10 July 2016.