

News from Copenhagen

Georgian parliamentary elections competitive and well-run, say observers



Post-election press conference in Tbilisi.



Meeting with Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili, Tbilisi.

The 8 October parliamentary elections in Georgia were competitive, well-administered and fundamental freedoms were generally respected, concluded observers in a preliminary statement delivered Sunday by Ignacio Sanchez Amor (MP, Spain), Special Co-ordinator of the short-term OSCE observer mission. The otherwise calm campaign atmosphere was, however, impacted by allegations of unlawful campaigning and some incidents of violence, the statement said.

Voting generally proceeded in an orderly manner, but tensions increased during the day and several violent altercations took place near and in polling stations, the observers said. Election day was generally assessed positively, although counting was assessed more negatively, due to procedural problems and increased tensions.

“Strongly competitive and well-run, yesterday’s elections offered an opportunity for voters to make informed choices about their options in a pluralistic but polarized media environment,” said Sanchez Amor. “The unacceptable isolated incidents of violence we’ve seen had an impact but, thankfully, did not undermine an otherwise positive election.”

While contestants were able to campaign freely, several parties made allegations of political pressure on candidates and campaign staff. The tone of the campaign between the two leading parties was confrontational and permeated the election atmosphere, the statement says. Incidents of the misuse of state resources and unlawful campaigning were also reported to observers.

“As election observers, we hoped for calm, uneventful

elections in which voters focus on the results rather than the process. In many respects, the elections have lived up to our expectations, with voters focusing primarily on the country’s future and getting there through competitive elections,” said Guglielmo Picchi (MP, Italy), Head of the OSCE PA delegation. “We call for responsible behavior as the country moves forward with the second round of the elections.” Some 50 majoritarian races are expected to be decided in a second round later this month.

The OSCE PA worked closely with partners from the OSCE/ODIHR, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, and the European Parliament. While in Tbilisi, Sanchez Amor and Picchi met with Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili on 5 October for discussions on the situation in the country ahead of the elections. Meetings were also held with Foreign Minister Mikheil Janelidze, State Minister on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration David Bakradze, and CEC Chair Tamar Zhvania.

The OSCE PA had 29 members of parliament from 17 countries who participated in the observation mission, which marked the 11th time the PA has observed elections in Georgia since 1995. From the International Secretariat, the mission was supported by Secretary General Roberto Montella, Deputy Secretary General Gustavo Pallares, Chief of the Executive Office Andreas Baker, Head of Administration for Election Observation Iryna Sabashuk, and Head of Communications and Press Nat Parry.

Election observation mission opens in Montenegro with arrival of staff

Observers are arriving in Podgorica this week for the parliamentary elections in Montenegro scheduled for 16 October. First Committee Rapporteur Margareta Cederfelt (MP, Sweden) has been appointed by OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Frank-Walter Steinmeier as Special Co-ordinator of the short-term OSCE observation mission to these elections. Consisting of some 46 observers from 22 countries, the OSCE PA’s delegation will be headed by OSCE PA Vice-President Azay Guliyev (MP, Azerbaijan).

The mission to Montenegro is the next in a series of election observation missions this autumn that have included Belarus, the Russian Federation and Georgia. Later this month, the

OSCE PA will observe the presidential election in Moldova, and next month, the general elections in the United States. Arta Dade (MP, Albania) has been appointed as Special Co-ordinator of the short-term OSCE observation mission to the presidential election in Moldova, with Geir Joergen Bekkevold (MP, Norway) serving as Head of the OSCE PA’s delegation.

In the U.S., PA President Christine Muttonen (MP, Austria) will serve as Special Co-ordinator and Makis Voridis (MP, Greece) will head the OSCE PA’s delegation. Election observers will also deploy to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for the parliamentary elections in December.