

Parliamentary elections in Belarus fell short of OSCE commitments



Vice-President Anne-Marie Lizin is received by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko

Despite some minor improvements, the 28 September parliamentary elections in Belarus ultimately fell short of OSCE commitments for democratic elections, international observers from the OSCE concluded in a preliminary statement issued on Monday, 29 September.

The election took place in a strictly controlled environment with a barely visible campaign, said the observers from the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

Voting was generally well conducted, but the process deteriorated considerably during the vote count. Promises to ensure transparency of the vote count were not implemented. The count was assessed as bad or very bad in 48 per cent of polling stations visited. Where access was possible, several cases of deliberate falsification of results were observed.

OSCE monitors were prevented or hindered from observing the vote count in 35 per cent of cases. This compromised the transparency of this fundamental element of the election process.

“The clear signals to improve the election process were not implemented and substantial improvements are required if Belarus is to conduct genuinely democratic elections in

line with our common OSCE commitments. Unfortunately the repeated signals of good will did not seem to have been correctly given or received. Consequently the significant progress we hoped for in the democratic development of Belarus did not materialize,” said Anne-Marie Lizin, Vice President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and Special Co-ordinator of the OSCE short-term observers.

Positive developments included the slightly increased access of opposition representatives to election commissions, the decision to rebroadcast once the five-minute candidate spots during prime time, and the recommendation to seal ballot box slots overnight during the five-day early voting period. Some opposition candidates noted progress in their ability to conduct meetings in authorized locations without interference.

The observation mission was led by 62 parliamentarians from the OSCE PA, who were accompanied by OSCE PA Special Representative Andreas Nothelle, Director of Communications Klas Bergman, Programme Officer Anna Chernova and Logistics Officer Petra Jezkova.



Joao Soares, Roy Blunt and Steny Hoyer

OSCE PA holds U.S. elections seminar

The preparations for the OSCE PA election observation mission to the U.S. elections, which began in August, continued on 22 and 23 September with a briefing/seminar on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.

Chaired by OSCE PA President Joao Soares, the seminar covered a wide range of election-related issues. Almost 50 parliamentarians from 17 countries participated in the two-day event.

Both the Democratic House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer and Republican Whip Roy Blunt addressed the parliamentarians. Other speakers included third party representatives as well as Thomas Nealy from the Congressional Research Service, Rosemary Rodriguez from the U.S. Election Assistance Commission and independent political analyst Stuart Rothenberg.

The deadline for registration to participate in the U.S. observation mission is 15 October.

Petur Blondal in Warsaw and Oslo

Petur Blondal (Iceland), Special Representative on the OSCE budget, visited ODIHR's headquarters in Warsaw on 25 September and the OSCE External Auditor (the Office of the Auditor General of Norway) in Oslo on 29 September. The purpose of Mr. Blondal's trip was to assess the quality of the management of public funds put at the disposal of the OSCE by its participating States while evaluating the transparency of the OSCE audit process.

On his way to Oslo, Mr. Blondal paid a visit to the PA's headquarters in Copenhagen on 26 September to meet with Deputy Secretaries General Tina Schoen and Gustavo Pallares.