News from Copenhagen

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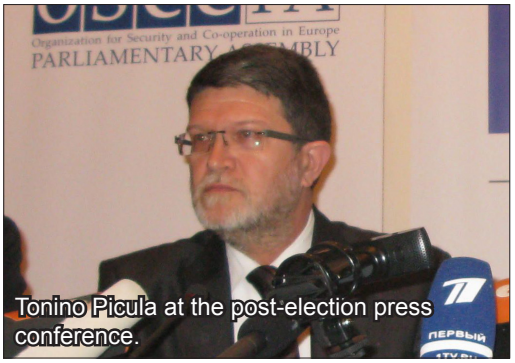
Russian presidential election 'unfair' says Picula

Coskun Coruz and Matteo Mecacci inspect a ballot box.



Tonino Picula at the post-election press conference.

Karl-Georg Wellmann speaks with Gennady Zyuganov.

Speaking on behalf of the OSCE at a post-election press conference in Moscow on 5 March, Tonino Picula stated:

"This election was characterized by number of problems from the very begining. The point of elections is that their outcome should be uncertain. This was not the case in Russia. The biggest problem with this election is that there was no real competition. It was not a level playing field and the abuse of executive power as well as the inappropriate use of administrative resources ensured that the ultimate winner of the election was never in doubt.

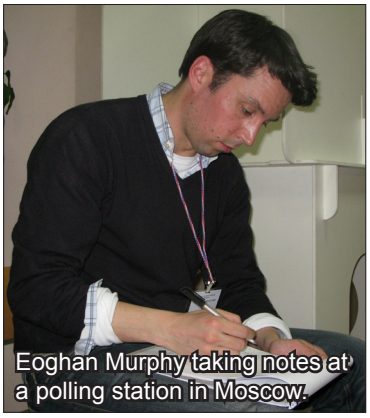
"The broadcast media was clearly biased in favour of one candidate and did not provide fair coverage of the other candidates. The signature requirements to register candidates for Presidential Elections in Russia do not allow for a wide participation of all interested candidates and parties.

"In conclusion we would like to underline that according to our assessment these elections were unfair despite some innovations in election process and unhindered possibilities for campaigning. We hope that the Russian authorities engage more energetically in complying with the OSCE Commitments and expect that they will take these remarks as an incentive to engage in the process of electoral reform thus allowing a genuine competition in future elections."

The observers noted that all candidates had access to the media, but Prime Minister Vladimir Putin was given a clear advantage over his competitors in terms of news coverage. In addition, state resources were mobilized at the regional level in his support and overly restrictive candidate registration requirements limited genuine competition.

While voting on election day was assessed positively, the process deteriorated significantly during the vote count which was assessed negatively by ODIHR in almost one-third of polling stations observed.

Picula, an OSCE PA vice-president, was appointed by Assembly President Petros Efthymiou to head the OSCE PA's delegation to the Russian election following a decision taken after discussion with heads of national delegations at the Assembly's Winter Meeting last month. The OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Irish Deputy Prime Minister Eamon Gilmore, appointed Picula Special Co-ordinator to head the short-term OSCE observer mission.


Eoghan Murphy taking notes at a polling station in Moscow.

Picula has previously led election observation missions in Kazakhstan and Moldova. He served as the Foreign Minister of Croatia from 2004 to 2008 and currently serves on the Foreign Policy Committee of the Croatian Parliament.

The PA's delegation consisted of First Committee Chair Karl-Georg Wellmann, Head of the OSCE PA's Irish Delegation Eoghan Murphy, Third Committee Chair Matteo Mecacci, and Third Committee Rapporteur Coskun Coruz, Secretary General Spencer Oliver, Programme Director Anna Chernova, and Deputy Director for Field Operations Roberto Montella. The mission was supported by Senior Counsellor Semyon Dzakhaev and Programme Officer Maria Chepurina from the International Secretariat. The OSCE PA delegation worked closely with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the OSCE/ODIHR.

Visits to Ukraine highlight rule of law

OSCE PA Vice-President Walburga Habsburg Douglas and Asa Lindestam (Sweden) on Monday visited Ukraine to meet with the OSCE field presence, government officials and civil society to take the pulse of the situation of democracy and rule of law in the country ahead of its 2013 OSCE Chairmanship.

Third Committee Rapporteur Coskun Coruz and Special Representative on Migration Kathleen Ferrier (Netherlands) visited the OSCE field presence 20-22 February to discuss rule of law and migration. They discussed the independence of the judiciary in Ukraine and OSCE projects to train judges.

Despite requests, both the Dutch and Swedish delegations were denied access to visit former Ukrainian prime minster Yulia Tymoshenko, who remains in prison.

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