

News from Copenhagen

Observers: Russian elections more transparent, but challenges remain

In a statement delivered Monday by Ilkka Kanerva (Finland), Special Co-ordinator and leader of the short-term OSCE observer mission to the Russian Federation, observers noted that the 18 September State Duma elections were transparently administered by the Central Election Commission, but challenges remain. The legal framework can serve as an adequate basis for elections, but the electoral environment was affected by restrictions to political rights, firmly controlled media and a tightening grip on civil society, said observers at a press conference in Moscow.

“The improved transparency and trust we have seen in the election administration are important steps, yet legal restrictions on basic rights continue to be a problem,” said Kanerva. “If Russia is to live up to its democratic commitments, greater space is needed for debate and civic engagement.”

Marietta Tidei (Italy), Head of the OSCE PA delegation, applauded the leadership of the CEC, but noted that the low-key campaign shows an overall lack of engagement. “I hope that we will soon see more political alternatives engaging the public in proper debate,” she said.

Observers also said that the liberalization of the party registration process has yet to result in distinct political alternatives, and that local authorities did not always treat



contestants equally. Instances of misuse of administrative resources were also noted, the statement says. Election day generally proceeded in an orderly manner, but numerous procedural irregularities were noted during counting. The CEC reacted to the reported irregularities, including ballot box stuffing and carousel voting, and announced preliminary voter turnout at 48 per cent.

The mission was a common endeavour of the OSCE PA and OSCE/ODIHR, led by Amb. Jan Petersen. The PA deployed a 82-member delegation supported by Andreas Baker, Iryna Sabashuk, Gustavo Pallares, Roberto Montella, Semyon Dzakhaev, Maria Chepurina, Francesco Pagani, Anna Di Domenico, and Maria Patrakova from the Secretariat. PA observers deployed to Moscow, St. Petersburg, Novosibirsk, Yaroslavl, Krasnodar, Samara, and Khabarovsk.

Cooperation needed in addressing challenges, says Muttonen in Warsaw and Strasbourg

In speeches over the past week, OSCE PA President Christine Muttonen (Austria) has called for a more balanced, cooperative approach to addressing common challenges. Speaking at the OSCE/ODIHR’s Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw on 19 Sept. and at the European Conference of Presidents of Parliaments on 16 Sept., Muttonen noted the PA’s willingness to work collaboratively towards implementing solutions based on principles of solidarity.

“The Parliamentary Assembly is always looking forward to working with our partners within the OSCE, the broader international community and civil society, to promote accountability and advance the cause of human security for all of us,” said Muttonen in Warsaw.

“No state is able to guarantee its citizens’ safety and security single-handedly or by going it alone,” she said in Strasbourg. “Most of the challenges can in fact only be



managed successfully in cooperation, in dialogue and by making compromises – by also taking into account the interests of other states.”

Both speeches touched on themes related to migration, stressing that the lack of consensus among governments on human rights is coinciding with the humanitarian crisis of migrants and refugees. She also described the work of the OSCE PA’s Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, inviting participating States to review the committee’s proposals.

Sena stresses benefits of migration at OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum

OSCE PA Second Committee Chair Nilza Sena (Portugal) participated in the Concluding Meeting of the 24th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum in Prague on 14-16 Sept. 2016. Focusing her remarks on migration, Sena underlined that in many of the OSCE’s participating States, the debate over refugees and migrants has largely disregarded human rights and humanitarian concerns and has been framed along the lines of the so-called burdens posed by migration, questions

of sovereignty and perceived security threats. She noted that many assumptions surrounding migration need to be revised, including false beliefs about negative economic impacts of migration, stressing that effective integration efforts can in fact help promote economic growth and increase tax revenues.

The Forum was organized by the German OSCE Chairmanship and the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities.