

News from Copenhagen

Ukraine election competitive but lacked genuine discussion of issues, observers say



George Tsereteli and Doris Barnett at Kyiv presser, 22 April

The 21 April presidential election in Ukraine was competitive and held with respect for fundamental freedoms, international observers concluded in a preliminary statement released Monday. The orderly transfer of power should offer the opportunity for strengthening democratic institutions and their accountability, although the campaign for both rounds lacked genuine discussion of issues of public concern, the statement says.

“The democratic and orderly transfer of power we witnessed yesterday is a great achievement by the Ukrainian people and paves the way for renewed efforts to advance necessary reforms to address burning issues and provide good governance,” said George Tsereteli, Special Co-ordinator and leader of the short-term OSCE observer mission.

Doris Barnett, Head of the delegation from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, said: “I am pleased that free elections are becoming the norm in Ukraine and that the people are making use of their right to vote. This election demonstrates that democracy in Ukraine has become more stable.”

The mission was a joint undertaking of the OSCE PA, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and the European Parliament.

North Macedonia election well run but legal framework needs improvement, observers say



Reinhold Lopatka and Sereine Mauborgne speak to the press at a polling station in Skopje, 21 April.

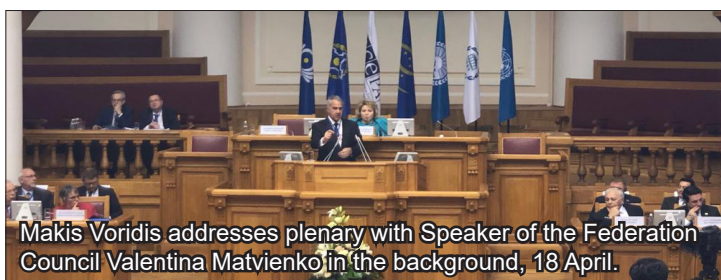
Sunday’s presidential election in North Macedonia was well run and fundamental freedoms of assembly and expression were respected, and election day was peaceful, orderly and transparent. However, wide-reaching electoral reform is still very much needed, international observers concluded in a preliminary statement released Monday.

“This peaceful, generally well run election demonstrated that the political will can be found to hold democratic elections,” said Sereine Mauborgne, Special Co-ordinator and leader of the short-term OSCE observer mission. “This constructive approach must be maintained through the second round and beyond.”

“We were pleased to see a campaign that addressed substantive concerns, with candidates engaging in debate on their visions for the future of North Macedonia,” said Reinhold Lopatka, head of the OSCE PA delegation. “All three candidates clearly advocated for further European integration; whatever future the people here may choose, democratic elections will be crucial.”

The election observation mission was a common endeavour of the OSCE PA, ODIHR and PACE. The PA expects to deploy observers for the second round of the election scheduled for 5 May.

Broad PA participation in St. Petersburg International Conference on Counter-Terrorism



Makis Voridis addresses plenary with Speaker of the Federation Council Valentina Matvienko in the background, 18 April.

OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism Chair Makis Voridis (Greece) and member Lisa Chambers (Ireland), human rights committee Chair Margareta Kiener Nellen (Switzerland), and economic and environmental committee Rapporteur Elona Gjebrea Hoxha (Albania), as

well as 11 other OSCE parliamentarians, participated in a conference on 18 April in St. Petersburg, Russia, that explored the parliamentary dimension of counter-terrorism.

The conference, organized by the Interparliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States with the support of the OSCE PA and several other parliamentary assemblies and UN agencies, addressed issues such as foreign terrorist fighters, the role of international institutions in building a common strategy to counter terrorism, and the need to better address terrorism financing.

Voridis held bilateral talks on the margins of the conference with Yuri Fedotov of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Sergei Lebedev of the CIS, and Liliane Maury Pasquier of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.