

Observers say Türkiye elections were competitive but marked by uneven playing field



Frank Schwabe, Michael Georg Link, Farah Karimi and Jan Petersen

Characterized by a high turnout, Türkiye's 14 May elections were well-managed and offered voters a choice between genuine political alternatives, observers said in a statement issued Monday, but the current president and the ruling parties enjoyed an unjustified advantage. Continued restrictions on fundamental freedoms of assembly, association and expression hindered the participation of some opposition politicians and parties, as well as civil society and independent media.

"These were competitive but still limited elections, as the criminalization of some political forces, including the detention of several opposition politicians, prevented full political pluralism and impeded individuals' rights to run in the elections," said Michael Georg Link, Special Co-ordinator and leader of the short-term OSCE observer mission. "Political interference in the electoral process is not in line with Türkiye's international commitments."

The election administration organized the elections efficiently and generally enjoyed trust, although there was lack of transparency and communication in their work, as well as concerns over its independence. Election day was mostly peaceful, despite a number of incidents in and around polling stations. While the

process was generally well-organized, important safeguards, particularly during the counting, were not always implemented. While the constitution guarantees the equality of women and men, women remain underrepresented in leadership positions and generally in politics, and greater efforts are needed from the authorities and political parties in this area.

"Despite the promising opportunity for choice presented in these elections, there were significant challenges for citizens exercise the right to vote, and unfortunately, women were underrepresented as candidates," said Farah Karimi, head of the OSCE PA delegation. "Hundreds of thousands of individuals, people affected by the earthquakes and particularly students, had to make significant additional efforts to exercise their right to vote."

The freedom of expression and the media, although protected by the constitution, are limited by a number of laws. The recent criminalization of disseminating false information, the fact that websites are frequently blocked and online content removed, and the ongoing arrests and prosecutions of journalists further weakened freedom of expression.

Secretary General Roberto Montella joined some 100 PA observers who deployed to Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir, Van and Diyarbakir. The PA worked closely with the OSCE/ODIHR mission, led by Amb. Jan Petersen, and observers from PACE, led by Frank Schwabe. From the International Secretariat, the PA delegation was supported by Andreas Baker, Iryna Sabashuk, Stephanie Koltchanov, Tim Knoblaue, Sherif Abdili, Dimitrije Todoric, Nat Parry, Freyja Koci, and Manon Comet.

The OSCE PA observer delegation will return for the second round of voting in Türkiye on 28 May.

Turkmenistan conference considers the role of neutral states in strengthening security

The PA and the Mejlis of Turkmenistan jointly hosted a one-day seminar on the role of neutral states in strengthening security, in the OSCE area. The event, held on Tuesday in Ashgabat in the framework of the Call for Action – Helsinki +50 initiative, gathered 130 participants including parliamentarians from the Central Asia region, Eastern and Western Europe, academia and media representatives, diplomats and students. Lamberto Zannier and Anastasiya Griadasova from the International Secretariat supported the event.

In her opening remarks, the Chairperson of the Mejlis of Turkmenistan, Dunyagozel Gulmanova, highlighted the importance of dialogue as a guarantee for peace. President Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden) emphasized the crucial role of neutral states to foster peaceful relationships. Vice-President and Special Representative on Central Asia Pia Kauma (Finland) noted that maintaining neutrality allows for the acutely needed space for dialogue, while Vice-President Askar Shakirov (Kazakhstan) emphasized the role of the OSCE in bringing together 57 states.

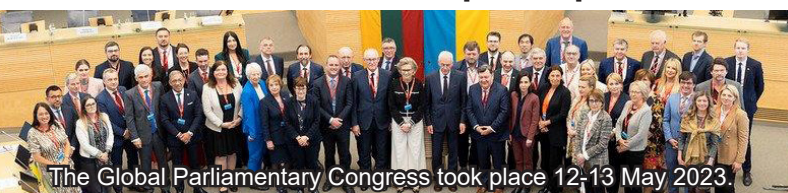


Participants of the conference in Ashgabat, 16 May

In the two sessions of the seminar participants discussed general principles and different models of neutrality, its importance for promoting dialogue and for achieving greater economic, social and political progress.

While in Ashgabat, Cederfelt met with President of Turkmenistan Serdar Berdimuhamedov and UN Resident Coordinator Dmytro Schlapachenko to discuss a wide range of issues, including regional security.

President Cederfelt participates in inter-parliamentary conference in Lithuania



The Global Parliamentary Congress took place 12-13 May 2023.

OSCE PA President Margareta Cederfelt took part in the Global Parliamentary Congress in Vilnius on 12-13 May. With members of 18 parliaments and international parliamentary

organizations from around the world, the conference focused on strengthening the parliamentary dimension to address long-term challenges. Speaking at the closing session, Cederfelt stressed the importance of democracy, rule of law, respect for international agreements, and multilateral co-operation. She also emphasized the need to maintain international unity in support of Ukraine, and highlighted the cases of Vladimir Kara-Murza and other political prisoners, noting in particular the work of OSCE PA Special Representative on Political Prisoners Steve Cohen (United States).