

Moldova's election well-managed and competitive, despite attempts to undermine integrity: observers



Johan Büser and Lucie Potůčková at the post-election press conference in Chisinau, 21 October 2024

Moldova's 20 October presidential election and constitutional referendum were well-managed and contestants campaigned freely in an environment characterized by concerns over illicit foreign interference and active disinformation efforts, international observers said in a preliminary statement released on Monday in Chisinau.

In a competitive but only minimally visible campaign, voters were offered a variety of political alternatives among presidential candidates, who were registered in an inclusive process. However, the manner in which the presidential election and referendum campaigns were conducted simultaneously, and media coverage that favoured the incumbent and the government, did not provide fully equal opportunities, the statement says.

"Moldova deserves credit for implementing a number of reforms to increase public confidence in the electoral system, in the context of heavy Russian propaganda. From implementing cybersecurity measures to ensuring a high degree of women's participation, there is much to celebrate in this election," said Lucie Potůčková (Czechia), Special Co-ordinator and leader of the short-term OSCE observers. "There are, however, some areas for improvement. The overlapping period between candi-

date registration and the campaign, for example, has created an uneven playing field, which is something we would like to see improved."

The campaigns took place in the context of the government addressing national security threats resulting from the war caused by the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine. Law enforcement authorities, many international actors and civil society organizations have proclaimed that Moldova is the target of an ongoing "hybrid war" that includes illicit financing of political actors, disinformation campaigns, and cyberattacks.

"The substantial number of international observers that deployed to observe the elections serves as a testament to the international community's steadfast support for Moldova's democratic path," said Johan Büser (Sweden), Head of the delegation from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. "In the context of Russia's full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine, pro-Russian actors have directed foreign interference and disinformation campaigns, while traditional views on minorities and LGBT rights were sometimes framed as reasons to vote 'No' on the EU referendum."

Election day was calm and well-organized, and the voting process was assessed overwhelmingly positively by the observers, with only a few procedural problems noted. The vote count and tabulation were assessed positively, overall.

Lucie Potůčková serves as Chair of the OSCE PA's Third Committee and Johan Büser serves as Treasurer. They worked closely with colleagues from the OSCE/ODIHR, led by Urszula Gacek, the European Parliament, led by Michael Gahler, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, led by Petra Bayr. Potůčková and Büser were supported by a five-member team from the OSCE PA International Secretariat.

OSCE PA deploying observers to this weekend's elections in Georgia and Uzbekistan

The OSCE PA's busy autumn of election observation activities continues this week with missions being deployed to Georgia and Uzbekistan. A team of more than 60 parliamentarians and staff from the OSCE PA will deploy to Georgia to observe the 26 October parliamentary elections, while nearly 60 OSCE PA observers from 25 countries are deploying to Uzbekistan for the 27 October parliamentary elections.

The OSCE PA team in Georgia will work closely with the OSCE/ODIHR, as well as with partner delegations from PACE, the NATO PA, and the European Parliament. Pascal Allizard (France) will serve as Special Co-ordinator and leader of the short-term OSCE observer mission, and OSCE PA President Pia Kauma (Finland) will serve as Head of the OSCE PA's

delegation.

In Uzbekistan, OSCE PA Second Committee Chair Azay Guliyev (Azerbaijan) will serve as Special Co-ordinator and leader of the short-term OSCE observer mission, while the Head of the OSCE PA delegation of observers will be Sargis Khandanyan (Armenia), who serves as the Vice-Chair of the Third Committee. The PA will work closely with the OSCE/ODIHR.

Both elections will be assessed against democratic commitments contained in the OSCE's 1990 Copenhagen Document. Preliminary findings and conclusions will be delivered at press conferences in Tbilisi and Tashkent on 27 October and 28 October, respectively.

OSCE PA Special Representative Hadjiyianni visits Mission to Moldova

On Monday, OSCE PA Vice-President and Special Representative on South East Europe Kyriakos Hadjiyianni (Cyprus) visited the OSCE Mission to Moldova in Chisinau to learn more about the Mission's work. The Head of Mission, Ambassador Kelly Keiderling, briefed Special Representative Hadjiyianni on the current differences between Chisinau and Tiraspol, and reviewed prospects for facilitating a lasting political settlement of the conflict.

Special Representative Hadjiyianni expressed the PA's support for the work of the Mission and its goals of consolidating the territorial integrity of Moldova within its internationally recognized borders with a special status for Transdniestria. He also voiced support for extending the Mission's mandate and return



to the regular practice of yearly mandate continuation.

As part of his mandate as Special Representative, Hadjiyianni works to contribute to advancing regional dialogue, in particular at the parliamentary level, and to raise awareness on the important work of the OSCE field operations.