

Elections in Ukraine did not meet international standards

“With heavy heart we have to conclude that the 2004 Presidential elections in Ukraine did not meet a considerable number of OSCE, Council of Europe and other international standards for democratic elections”, concluded Rt. Hon. Bruce George (UK), President Emeritus of the OSCE PA, at the press conference in Kiev on 1 November. Mr. George gave this statement on behalf of the International Election Observation Mission (IEOM), which included representatives from the OSCE PA, Council of Europe PA, NATO PA, European Parliament and the ODIHR. Mr. George also felt that “this election process constituted a step backwards from the 2002 elections” in Ukraine.

In the joint IEOM statement representatives of the five institutions, in particular, criticized the election campaign. According to their observations the incumbent Prime Minister and candidate Mr. Yanukovich’s campaign did not make a clear separation between resources owned or managed by the incumbent political forces and the State resources. International observers also criticized the State media and State administration for overwhelming bias in favour of Mr. Yanukovich. The public’s access to balanced information was constrained by the existence of the so-called *temnyki* (media guidelines). There were also



Mr. Bruce George presenting the statement of the International Election Observation Mission at the press conference in Kiev. On the left Ambassador Geert Ahrens, Head of the OSCE/ODIHR Observation Mission.

observation of disruption or obstruction of some opposition campaign events. The IEOM also made a number of critical observations concerning the legal framework, voter lists and work of the Central Election Committee.

The IEOM also took note of a number of positive aspects and progress in the election process. They concluded that there was political pluralism and competition, which offered voters the potential for real choice. They also took note of the candidates’ possibility to hold a number of campaign events and that the televised debates between the candidates had provided forums for exchange of views. The observers were particularly impressed by a large number of devoted Ukrainian citizens who worked as members of polling station committees or domestic observers providing a peaceful and in general orderly voting process on the polling day.

The IEOM in Ukraine was amongst the largest ever deployed in an OSCE participating State. There were more than 600 observers, including some 130 parliamentarians representing four parliamentary institutions. The OSCE PA deployed 47 observers from 18 participating States, providing the largest number of parliamentary observers.

Senator Jerry Grafstein (Canada) was the Deputy Head of the OSCE PA Delegation. Together with Mr. George he participated in the negotiations on the unanimously agreed joint statement.



Mr. George observing voting in a Kiev hospital. A patient drops her ballot in a portable ballot box, which is brought to her bedside by representatives of the polling station committee.