

## Russian Elections “not fair” say OSCE PA and PACE



President Lennmarker announced the conclusions of the observation mission in Moscow, along with Luc van den Brande of the Council of Europe PA and OSCE PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver

The Russian elections to the Duma on 2 December were “not fair” and failed to meet many OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and standards, concluded the OSCE PA and PACE election observer delegations in a joint statement on 3 December at a press conference in Moscow. The Nordic Council joined in the statement.

The OSCE PA and PACE delegations were led by President Goran Lennmarker and Luc van den Brande. The observers were deployed to eight regions across Russia, from St. Petersburg to Vladivostok.

According to the statement, the following major areas raised concern:

- The merging of the state and a political party is an abuse of power and a clear violation of international commitments and standards.
- The media showed strong bias in favour of President Putin and the ruling United Russia Party.
- The new election code makes it extremely difficult for new and smaller parties to develop and compete effectively.
- There were widespread reports of harassment of opposition parties.

The Copenhagen Commitments (5.4), agreed by all OSCE participating states, specifically state that there should be “a clear separation between the State and political parties; in particular, political parties will not be merged with the State”. The Council of Europe’s Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters (I.2.3) lays down that state authorities must have “a neutral attitude” to the election campaign, media coverage and party and campaign funding.

Although election day was well-organized and mostly calm and friendly, the voters went to the polls in an atmosphere that

“seriously limited political competition and frequent abuse of administrative resources, media coverage strongly in favour of the ruling party, and an election code whose cumulative effect hindered political pluralism,” the statement said. It added that the political playing field was not “level.”

The OSCE PA mission received excellent co-operation from the electoral authorities, and no restrictions were placed on Members’ movements throughout the country. Parliamentarians also received extensive briefings from electoral authorities, political parties, and opposition leaders both in Moscow and in the various regions of observation.

The OSCE PA observation mission took place after several months of intensive preparations and research, including extensive monitoring of the Russian and international media, pre-visits to Russia by staff and by the President and the Secretary General of the Assembly. The full text of the joint statement can be found at [www.oscepa.org](http://www.oscepa.org).



OSCE PA Members observed voting throughout Russia. Vice-President Anne-Marie Lizin and Wolfgang Grossruck are seen here in Vladivostok