

PA Vice-President Christmas-Møller, in Skopje, notes 'remarkable improvement' in re-run elections

Noting "remarkable improvement with regard to the key issue of security," OSCE PA Vice-President Pia Christmas-Møller declared in Skopje that the 15 June re-run elections in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia gave voters in areas affected by irregularities on 1 June the opportunity to express their will in a secure environment. The police presence was much heavier than on 1 June and, Ms. Christmas-Møller reported, was effective in preventing violent incidents as well as possible fraud. Speaking on behalf of the OSCE, she also applauded the open and transparent process through which the State Election Commission addressed complaints from the 1 June elections.

While acknowledging improvements, observers re-emphasized that certain key OSCE commitments were not

met in these elections and that further progress is still needed. Ms. Christmas-Møller expressed her hope however that the effort to improve security and provide voters the opportunity to freely cast their vote "indicates that the country is willing to address the range of democratic challenges that remain."

"This is crucial when it comes to fulfilling the country's wishes to participate on an equal footing with other democratic countries," she said.

The International Election Observation Mission was a joint undertaking of the OSCE PA, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and the OSCE/ODIHR. The OSCE PA delegation consisted of Ms. Christmas-Møller, Christian Miesch (Switzerland), and Josy Dubie (Belgium). They were accompanied by Presidential Advisor Andreas Baker.

OSCE PA-CIS IPA discussions on election monitoring conclude

On May 26, parliamentarians from the OSCE PA and the IPA of the CIS met at the CIS IPA headquarters in St. Petersburg to discuss the quality and future of election observation. The OSCE PA delegation was led by President Emeritus Alcee Hastings and included Vice-Presidents Pia Christmas Møller and Joao Soares, as well as Alexander Kozlovsky, Head of the Russian Delegation to the OSCE PA, and senior members of the International Secretariat Staff.

The informal dialogue in St. Petersburg was initiated by PA President Göran Lenmarker and Sergey Mironov, the Speaker of the Russian Federation Council and Chairman of the CIS IPA, after President Lenmarker addressed the CIS IPA Plenary Session in early April of this year.

The joint meeting in St. Petersburg was preceded by discussions between experts from both sides which took place in Copenhagen on April 28. Participants in the St. Petersburg dialogue exchanged views based on the 1990 Copenhagen

Commitments, the CIS Convention on Standards of Democratic Elections, the 1997 OSCE PA-ODIHR Co-operation Agreement, the proposal on this subject put forward by the Russian Federation and several CIS delegations in Vienna last year, the Council of Europe Venice Commission standards, and the ODIHR Election Observation Handbook.

Following the meeting in St. Petersburg, Mr. Hastings, Mr. Soares, and Secretary General Spencer Oliver briefed the Chairman-in-Office and the Finnish OSCE Chairmanship Task Force. "Although we did not formally agree on common standards for election observation, both sides benefited from a full and frank exchange of views, which showed potential agreement on a number of difficult issues in this important area of our work," Mr. Hastings said after briefing OSCE Chairman-in-Office Alexander Stubb in Helsinki. A report will also be made to the Standing Committee in Astana.



From left to right, Pia Christmas-Møller, Spencer Oliver, Alcee Hastings, Joao Soares, and Alexander Kozlovsky