

News from Copenhagen

U.S. elections demonstrate commitment to democracy, observers say



Joao Soares delivers the post-election statement on 3 November

The 2 November mid-term elections demonstrated again United States' commitment to democracy and the vote reflected the will of the people, international observers from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly said in its post-election statement released on 3 November in Washington, DC.

On election day, polling proceeded in a calm and well-organized manner, although the international observers also noted what they thought to be a lack of voter secrecy. Voting booths and electronic machines were often placed too closely to each other.

The ability of voters to vote early and the encouragement of such early voting clearly eased any capacity problems that might have occurred. Technical difficulties with the machines were generally solved quickly and did not seem to influence the integrity of the vote.

The campaign was highly competitive and at times intense and dirty. Money played a significant role, creating an uneven playing field between candidates. About three-quarters of the total of nearly four billion dollars was spent on political campaign ads on television and radio. The ads inundated the airwaves, turning many voters off, the statement also said.

"It is troubling that so many of the political ads did not reveal the source of the funding. This fact undermined transparency and accountability in the elections," said President Emeritus Joao Soares, OSCE Special Co-ordinator



Roberto Battelli and Alexander Kozlovskiy at a pre-election briefing in Washington on 29 November

for the observation mission.

The post-election statement pointed to this lack of accountability as a possible factor in the negative tone of the campaign. "The lack of transparency could be linked to the overall negative tone in the campaign, with 30 second political ads used to attack opponents by undisclosed sources in the lead," the statement said.

The U.S. electoral system continues to be decentralized and highly diverse with a lack of uniform country-wide standards, creating vulnerabilities in the system. OSCE PA observers encourage further debate to develop more uniform standards within the U.S. election system.

The OSCE PA's election observation mission assessed the U.S. elections for their conformity with the 1990 Copenhagen Commitments, to which the United States has subscribed. The mission included 56 observers of whom 42 were parliamentarians from 21 countries. The observers were deployed to six states, Virginia, Maryland, Colorado, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Delaware, plus the District of Columbia.

The mission was supported by several staff members of the International Secretariat, including Deputy Secretaries General Tina Schoen and Gustavo Pallares, as well as Senior Counsellor Semyon Dzakhiev and Presidential Advisor Andreas Baker.



Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter meeting with parliamentary observers George Tsereteli and Christine Muttonen on 1 November