

# News from Copenhagen

## VPs Harstedt and Barnett lead election observation in Ukraine



Doris Barnett speaks to the media at a polling station in Kyiv on 26 October.



Liv Holm Andersen (MP, Denmark) observes at a polling station in Kharkiv on 26 October.



Kent Harstedt opens pre-election briefings in Kyiv on 24 October.

The 26 October early parliamentary elections in Ukraine marked an important step in consolidating democratic elections in line with international commitments, the observers said in a statement delivered Monday in Kyiv by Kent Harstedt, the Special Co-ordinator and leader of the short-term OSCE observer mission. The elections were characterized by many positive aspects, including an impartial and efficient Central Election Commission, competitive contests that offered voters real choice, and general respect for fundamental freedoms.

“At this crucial moment for the future of their country, Ukraine’s institutions and voters responded to daunting challenges with an election that largely upheld democratic commitments,” said Harstedt. “That response and, in particular, the authorities’ determination to enable voting in as many areas of the country as possible, demonstrate a resilience that will help the country overcome its national and international challenges.”

“The nearly 30 seats that will be left empty in the new parliament serve as a stark reminder that illegal armed groups prevented voters in some parts of the country from being able to vote,” said Doris Barnett, Head of the OSCE PA delegation. “These illegal actions do not call into question the validity of the overall election. We look forward to these seats being

filled as soon as possible so that representatives of those areas can join their colleagues in an open dialogue to the benefit of all Ukrainians.”

In most of the country, election day proceeded calmly, with few disturbances and only isolated security incidents reported. The voting process was assessed positively in 99 per cent of the polling stations observed, although some procedural irregularities were identified. Due to the efforts of the election administration to ensure voting in as much of the east as possible under extraordinary circumstances, voting took place in 12 out of 21 election districts in the Donetsk region, and in five out of 11 in the Luhansk region.

Harstedt led some 700 short-term OSCE election observers. The OSCE PA’s delegation, headed by Barnett, included parliamentarians from 31 countries who deployed to Kyiv, Bila Tserkva, Chernigiv, Zhitomyr, Cherkasi, Kaniv, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Odessa and Lviv.

The mission was supported by Deputy Secretary General Gustavo Pallares, Special Representative Andreas Nothelle, Director for Political Programmes Roberto Montella, Director of Elections Andreas Baker, Communications Director Richard Solash, Deputy Director of Administration Marc Carillet, and Operations Officer Iryna Sabashuk.

### PA participates in Mediterranean Conference

Dijana Vukomanovic, Head of the Serbian Delegation to the OSCE PA, represented the Assembly this week at the OSCE Mediterranean Conference held in Neum, Bosnia and Herzegovina. In her opening remarks, Vukomanovic noted the PA’s ongoing interest in enhancing the

OSCE’s Mediterranean dialogue and the need for the OSCE to enhance its role in the region by further prioritizing closer co-operation with the Mediterranean partners.

The OSCE Mediterranean Conference was held in four sessions on 27-28 October devoted to arms trafficking, counter-terrorism, and enhancing the role of women in public, political and economic life. Participants included representatives of the OSCE participating States, the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia), international organizations and NGOs.

### PA to observe midterm elections in the U.S.

OSCE parliamentarians will conduct a limited election observation mission to the United States of America for the country’s midterm Congressional elections on 4 November. Isabel Santos (MP, Portugal), Chair of the PA’s Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions, will serve as head of the delegation, which will comprise nearly 40 MPs from 20 countries.

“I am eager to lead a diverse group of parliamentarians to observe the U.S. vote, holding it up to the same standards that we apply throughout the OSCE area,” Santos said.

OSCE PA observers will participate in several days of briefings ahead of election day, engaging with experts, participants in the political process and members of the media. Observers will then deploy to polling stations in the Washington area on 4 November.