



For immediate release

PRESS RELEASE

Parliamentary election sets stage for further reform in Ukraine

Kyiv, 22 July 2019

Today, Mission Canada 2019 issued its Preliminary Statement of Findings for the 2019 early parliamentary elections in Ukraine after analyzing all aspects of the electoral process to date, including the establishment of electoral commissions, printing of ballots, conduct of the vote, and counting procedures on election day.

The Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, Head of Mission, stated: “Ukrainians have affirmed their commitment to democratic development by electing a new parliament in an election that largely met international democratic standards. These early elections took place in a climate of increased expectations that the new parliament will deliver on voters’ desire for change.” He added: “The parliamentary elections were held amid the tragedy of war. Due to the Russian Federation’s aggression against Ukraine, citizens in Crimea, and parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts could not exercise their democratic rights and express their preferences. It is particularly noteworthy that at a time when millions of Ukrainians were exercising their democratic rights, tens of thousands of Russians took to the streets of Moscow demonstrating their desire for democracy.”

“This parliamentary election provides the third opportunity this year for us to observe Ukrainian elections. We note the growing optimism that has led to a strong political surge towards continued change and reform, leading to hope for many and maintaining the tide of democratic progress” – said the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy. “The exercise of these democratic rights includes more than the act of voting; there are many other crucial elements to allow for democratic choices.”

According to the mission’s findings, the voting took place in an orderly fashion, although there have been – in certain cases – incidents of irregularities such as vote buying, candidate cloning and localized misuse of administrative resources. This is especially pronounced in the single mandate districts, which are more vulnerable to these types of violations. These local activities did not have a significant impact on the outcome of the elections.

A crucial element of a fully functioning democracy is the checks and balances and the continued impartial application of the rule of law executed by the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government. One of the key responsibilities of the new Parliament will be to further reform the court system and strengthen its independence. This is illustrated by the statement of the G7 Ambassadors regarding the proposed new Lustration Law.

The mission again expresses concerns over the concentration of media ownership at national and regional levels, limiting access to balanced coverage and information about different campaign platforms and views. With campaigns increasingly run online, black PR and disinformation shaped the information space, and social media was used to undermine opponents. Additionally, there is evidence of Russian interference in the campaign, particularly in the online and social media space.

Mission Canada highlights the need for increased funding for public broadcasting as suggested by President Zelenskiy and the need for more effective application of existing anti-trust laws. Additionally, the plight of Ukrainian investigative journalists and anti-corruption activists remains a significant concern for the mission due to high rates of intimidation and physical assaults.

Regarding the participation of women in Ukraine's political life, the Deputy Head of Mission, Olya Odynska-Grod noted: "Mission Canada applauds the increase in the number of women included in the party lists, however, we note that the issue of gender equality remained absent from political party platforms and candidates' campaigns."

"The low number of women elected to parliament ultimately means that women will continue to struggle to have an impact on the laws and policies of the country. The representation of women in Ukraine's parliament remains amongst the lowest in Europe" – she added. The new electoral code adopted by the Parliament provides for an open list proportional system. This creates additional opportunities for further participation in the electoral process and provides for further consideration by parliament of issues of concern to women.

Regretfully, the new Parliament was elected largely without the participation of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and internal migrants. Despite CEC regulations making it easier for IDPs and internal migrants to register to temporarily change their voting place, the issue of their residency requirements remain unresolved, resulting in their disenfranchisement.

"The mission congratulates the incredibly committed citizens of Ukraine who participated in every step of the early parliamentary elections as candidates, their representatives, members of the central, district and precinct electoral commissions, security forces, civil society, observers and voters" – said the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy. "This is an especially notable achievement in the face of aggressive outside interference."

We applaud the active engagement of over 300 Canadian volunteer observers who participated in the monitoring mission to support democracy in Ukraine. We acknowledge the dedicated efforts of the staff of the Embassy of Canada to Ukraine lead by His Excellency Roman Waschuk.

Mission Canada 2019 observed the entire electoral process and continues to follow the response to election results and possible legal challenges. Its Final Report covering both the presidential and the parliamentary elections will be issued in a few months, including recommendations for future elections.

For media enquiries, please contact:

Agnes Doka,
Director of Communications
Phone: +380 (96) 2210743,
Email: agnes.doka@canadem.ca

For the Preliminary Statement of Findings follow: <https://www.canademissions.ca/media-news>

###

Background to CANADEM Election Observation

CANADEM has participated in over 130 missions in more than 40 countries, playing a crucial role in strengthening the democratic process globally. It has mobilized nearly 2000 election observers to Ukraine for 11 elections since 2004. CANADEM EOM operates in accordance with the "Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation", adopted at the United Nations in 2005.