

# News from Copenhagen

## OSCE Parliamentary Assembly observes early presidential election in Kazakhstan



George Tsereteli and Margareta Kiener Nellen speak to the press at a polling station in Nur-Sultan, 9 June 2019.

The OSCE PA wrapped up its election observation in Kazakhstan Monday, finding that while there was potential for the 9 June early presidential election to become a force for political change, a lack of regard for fundamental rights, including detentions of peaceful protestors, and widespread voting irregularities on election day, showed scant respect for democratic standards.

“While there were seven candidates, including for the first time a woman, the election showed that there is a need for genuine democratic consolidation and significant political, social and legal reforms,” said PA President George Tsereteli

(Georgia), Special Co-ordinator and leader of the OSCE short-term observer mission.

“Voting generally proceeded in an orderly manner inside polling stations,” said Margareta Kiener Nellen (Switzerland), Head of the OSCE PA mission. “However, massive arrests of peaceful demonstrators in the streets, including journalists, violate the constitutionally guaranteed freedoms of assembly and expression.”

The OSCE PA deployed 49 parliamentarians and staff, who observed in Nur-Sultan and Almaty. The PA worked closely with colleagues from OSCE/ODIHR, whose mission was led by Urszula Gacek.

Observers found that the election law provides a technical basis for the conduct of elections but restrictions to freedoms of assembly and association, together with serious shortcomings in the legislative framework, hampered the conduct of democratic elections. Further, while freedom of expression and information are guaranteed in the constitution, they are curtailed by the law and access to websites and social networks was frequently blocked, observers noted.

## Tsereteli, Guliyev and Hadjiyianni address Tbilisi conference on parliamentary oversight

OSCE PA President George Tsereteli (Georgia), Vice-President Azay Guliyev (Azerbaijan) and Third Committee Rapporteur Kyriakos Hadjiyianni (Cyprus) represented the Assembly at a conference in Tbilisi last week focused on parliamentary oversight. The conference, organized by the OSCE/ODIHR, the Parliament of Georgia, the OSCE PA and the National Democratic Institute, brought together parliamentarians from a dozen countries to consider challenges and opportunities related to parliament’s oversight activities.

In a keynote address, President Tsereteli called for continued attention to uphold and strengthen OSCE parliaments’ roles in holding governments accountable. “Parliament is the steadying hand that makes sure that state actions are efficient and that they respond to the needs of the public,” he said at the opening session.

Guliyev moderated a session dedicated to exploring

the roles of plenary and committees in conducting oversight. He encouraged full use of the various tools available to parliamentarians, including investigations in committees as well as agenda-setting opportunities in plenary.



Azay Guliyev participates in the conference in Tbilisi, 6 June.

Addressing a session focused on oversight in the field of human rights, Hadjiyianni stressed that human rights principles are of limited use if only left on paper. He highlighted the resolution he has drafted for the OSCE PA’s Annual Session in Luxembourg next month, which urges parliaments to hold governments accountable for violations of commitments.

## Tsereteli holds high-level meetings in Baku, speaks at regional security conference



George Tsereteli and Ilham Aliyev in Baku, 11 June

President George Tsereteli was in Baku from 11-12 June, holding meetings with President Ilham Aliyev, Chairman of the Milli Meclis Ogtay Asadov, and Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov. In meetings, he stressed the co-operation

of the OSCE PA with Azerbaijan, and highlighted the willingness of the PA to contribute to peace-building by enhancing parliamentary dialogue.

He also delivered a keynote speech at the Parliamentary Conference on Regional Security and Co-operation, a joint parliamentary conference between Parliamentary Delegations of Azerbaijan, Germany and Turkey. In his speech, he emphasized the importance of parliamentary diplomacy and dialogue in addressing the topics dealt with by the OSCE.