



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1180 Vienna, 22 March 2018

EU statement on the presidential elections in Russia

Presidential elections took place in the Russian Federation on 18 March, with Vladimir Putin voted into a fourth term as President.

According to the preliminary findings of the internationally-recognised OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission (EOM), the elections were conducted in an overly controlled legal and political environment, marked by continued pressure on critical voices.

We are deeply concerned by the restrictions of fundamental freedoms that were observed by the OSCE/ODIHR EOM. Indeed, the OSCE/ODIHR EOM recorded restrictions on freedoms of assembly, association and expression, as well as on candidate registration, which limited the space for political engagement, resulting in a lack of genuine competition. As also noted by the observers, extensive and uncritical coverage of the incumbent in most media resulted in an uneven playing field, efforts to increase the turnout predominated over the campaign of the contestants, and a number of activists who questioned the legitimacy of the elections were detained.

Overall, the OSCE/ODIHR EOM recognised that elections were administered efficiently and openly by the Central Electoral Commission and, on the day, conducted in an orderly manner despite shortcomings related to vote secrecy and transparency of counting.

We expect Russia to address the violations and shortcomings reported by the OSCE/ODIHR EOM, as they run against Russia's OSCE commitments and other international obligations.

The European Union does not recognise the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation and therefore does not recognise the holding of elections by the Russian Federation in the Crimean peninsula. The OSCE/ODIHR observers did not conduct any activities in these territories that are part of Ukraine; their activities were limited to the Russian Federation. The EU remains unwavering in its support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.

The European Union deplores that polling stations for the Russian presidential elections were opened in the Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia without the consent by the Georgian authorities. We reiterate our firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE and CANADA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.