

UKRAINIAN WORLD CONGRESS INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION TO
THE 26 OCTOBER 2014 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN UKRAINE

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

26 October 2014, Kyiv, Ukraine - The Ukrainian World Congress (UWC) International Election Observation Mission to the 26 October 2014 Parliamentary Elections in Ukraine (UWC Mission) is the third largest international observer mission to the early Parliamentary Elections in Ukraine after those of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations.

The UWC Mission, which included 227 registered observers from 25 countries, monitored the vote in Ukraine and at diplomatic missions around the world. The UWC Mission is headed by UWC Third Vice President Petro Sztyk and the Chief Observer is Olena Koszarny, Chair of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress Advisory Board in Ukraine. The UWC Mission is also cooperating with the observer mission of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, a UWC member organization with 105 accredited observers, bringing the combined observer group of the affiliated organizations to over 330 observers.

The conclusions of the UWC Mission are based upon direct observations by its short-term observers (STOs) and meetings held with officials from state institutions, representatives of political parties, media, civil society and the international community that included the Prime Minister of Ukraine, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, the Mayor of Kyiv, the Security Service of Ukraine, the Central Election Committee of Ukraine, the Canadian Election Observation Mission (CANEOM), and Ukrainian NGOs – Opora, Civil movement “Chesno” and “Vostok – SOS”.

In total, the UWC Mission was present in 27 electoral precincts, including 3 electoral precincts in the Donetsk region. As a result, the UWC Mission observers monitored the vote in over 1200 polling stations situated in hundreds of cities and surrounding villages throughout Ukraine, including Sloviansk, Kramatorsk, Mykolayivka and Krasniy Lyman in the Donetsk region.

The UWC Mission has analyzed both the campaign and the elections in light of Ukraine’s international commitments to democracy, the rule of law, freedom of speech, and fair and free elections.

The Ukrainian Parliament or “Verkhovna Rada” is elected through a mixed electoral system. Half of the deputies are elected in single-member constituencies through a first-past-the-post system, and the other half are elected through closed lists of political parties with a five percent electoral threshold. Since elections in Crimea, Sevastopol, and some parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts cannot take place, at least 26 deputies in majority constituencies will not be elected.

To properly examine whether the Parliamentary Elections in Ukraine demonstrated the will of the Ukrainian people, the UWC Mission examined the entire election process in the context of key international standards. These included universal and equal suffrage, a sound legal framework, a level playing field for all candidates in the campaign, impartial and transparent election administration, an election process free of pressure and coercion, independent media and balanced coverage, ability to remedy violations of electoral rights, and a voting process that is free of manipulation.

In monitoring the election process and the vote tabulation, UWC STOs reported isolated infractions such as duplicate ballot boxes, unsealed ballot boxes, a great surplus of ballots in relation to the number of registered voters at certain polling stations, and a deficiency of ballots at other polling stations. In certain circumstances, election commissioners refused to provide copies of election protocols to UWC STOs.

UWC STOs also noted organizational shortcomings such as late opening of polling stations, lack of voter privacy, an insufficient number of protocols for reporting purposes.

These infractions and organizational shortcomings did not impact the election results and were instead isolated occurrences. The governing authorities made every effort to ensure that the elections were transparent and conducted on the highest level. We did not observe any abuse or misuse of administrative resources to support any one candidate or political party. **Most voters were able to express their will on election day**, despite the very complicated situations in the oblasts of Donetsk and Luhansk caused by overt Russian military aggression, and in Crimea that is illegally occupied by the Russian Federation. Though persons displaced as a result of the illegal occupation of certain territories of Ukraine by the Russian Federation have been provided a right to vote at the district of their temporary residence, it is unclear how many have actually been able to take advantage of this right and vote in these elections. Official government statistics and the statistics of independent non-governmental organizations confirm a total voter turnout surpassing 51 %.

On the basis of the monitoring results of the UWC Mission, our preliminary assessment is that the 2014 early Parliamentary Elections in Ukraine have met international standards for the conduct of democratic elections.

This preliminary statement is delivered prior to the completion of counting and tabulation, the announcement of preliminary and final results, and adjudication of possible complaints and appeals. The UWC Mission will publish a comprehensive final report and offer recommendations for potential improvements after completion of the election process.

The UWC Mission expresses gratitude to the Ukrainian people for their hospitality during its work, particularly on 26 October 2014, the day of monitoring of the early Parliamentary Elections in Ukraine.

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About UWC

The UWC is the international coordinating body for Ukrainian communities in the diaspora representing the interests of over 20 million Ukrainians. The UWC has member organizations in 33 countries and ties with Ukrainians in 14 additional countries. Founded in 1967, the UWC was recognized in 2003 by the United Nations Economic and Social Council as a non-governmental organization (NGO) with special consultative status.