

**UKRAINIAN WORLD CONGRESS INTERNATIONAL OBSERVATION MISSION  
TO UKRAINE'S 2019 ELECTIONS**

**Parliamentary Election in Ukraine on 21 July 2019**

**PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS ON MEDIA-MONITORING**

**Kyiv, Ukraine, 24 July 2019** – The Ukrainian World Congress (UWC) is the international coordinating body for Ukrainian communities in the diaspora representing the interests of over 20 million Ukrainians. The UWC has a network of member organizations and ties with Ukrainians in over 60 countries.

Founded in 1967, the UWC was recognized in 2003 by the United Nations Economic and Social Council as a non-governmental organization with special consultative status and obtained in 2018 participatory status as an international non-governmental organization with the Council of Europe.

On 11 July 2019, the Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation declared the UWC to be an undesirable organization that constitutes a threat to the constitutional order and security of the Russian Federation.

Since 1999, the UWC has deployed election observation missions to monitor all Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Ukraine.

The UWC International Observation Mission to Ukraine's 2019 Elections (UWC Mission) is the fourth largest international observation mission to the Parliamentary Election in Ukraine after the observation missions of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (ODIHR OSCE), the European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations (ENEMO) and CANADEM.

The Central Election Commission of Ukraine (CEC) registered 142 short-term observers (STOs) with the UWC Mission who came from 30 countries.

The UWC Mission has also closely cooperated with the observation mission of its member organization, Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA), which registered 32 STOs. Together, the UWC and the UCCA missions registered 174 STOs with the CEC.

The UWC Mission has also mobilized 125 long-term observers (LTOs) from 28 countries, namely: Australia, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Estonia, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Mozambique, Moldova, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

The UWC long-term observation mission is unique since our LTOs are monitoring media in their countries of residence for potential disinformation.

UWC LTOs monitored the media in 20 languages for any evidence of disinformation, namely: Arabic, Azeri, Bosnian, Czech, Dutch, English, Estonian, French, German, Greek, Italian, Kazakh, Latvian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Serbian, Slovak, Spanish, and Ukrainian.

UWC LTOs completed online training on the specifics of the media environment during the election period and on submitting online reports.

The online reporting system was developed in partnership with Sterling Business School and in consultation with representatives of StopFake and Kyiv Mohyla Academy School of Journalism.

The long-term media monitoring of the UWC Mission regarding the Parliamentary Election has been realized at distance and in two stages:

- 1) UWC LTOs fill out online reports when they find articles that aim to discredit or tarnish either the electoral process in Ukraine in general, or a specific party or candidate in particular.
- 2) The monitoring team then systematizes and analyzes the LTO reports and makes conclusions accordingly.

The main geopolitical goals of Russian disinformation around the world include blurring the lines between fact and fiction, creating confusion and doubt, and instilling in the audience a belief that the truth does not exist. Disinformation campaigns in traditional and social media are often tailored to sow discord in a society, accentuate divisions between certain groups or fabricate controversies where they have not existed previously. In many places around the world, Russian disinformation has attempted to portray international institutions and various countries as hopeless, ineffectual, dishonest or corrupt with the goal of weakening them to further the geopolitical and imperial aims of the Russian Federation.

On 3 November 2015, former U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Benjamin Ziff testified as follows before the Subcommittee on Europe and Regional Security Cooperation of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee:

*“The Kremlin sponsors these efforts with a sophisticated \$1.4 billion-a-year propaganda apparatus at home and abroad, which claims to reach 600 million people across 130 countries in 30 languages. The Russian government also funds think tanks and outside organizations in its neighboring states to help achieve its goals of promoting the Kremlin’s false narratives; portraying the West as a threat; and undermining trust in independent media as well as Western institutions and values.”*

In the case of Ukraine, disinformation has been and remains an integral part of Russian hybrid warfare, which includes military, economic, cyber, and information components.

The ultimate goal of Russian hybrid warfare, including disinformation, is to weaken Ukraine in order to return it to the Russian sphere of influence and domination.

Effectively drawing on its international and multilingual network of diaspora communities, the UWC Mission has detected numerous examples of Russian disinformation about Ukraine and its electoral processes in foreign media.

The UWC Mission has noted various disinformation narratives during Ukraine’s Parliamentary Election, which have been disseminated in various languages through traditional and social media outside of Ukraine. The target audience has been the international community with different degrees of involvement with Ukraine.

Some of the narratives uncovered by the LTOs of the UWC Mission at the time of writing the Preliminary Observations include the following:

- On 7 June 2019, the website Mediapart published in English and, on 8 June 2019, the AgoraVox site re-posted in French, an article titled “*Do French taxpayers sponsor the Ukrainian conflict?*”, which states: “*All these events are causing more and more protest by ordinary French taxpayers who ask whether France is financing the Ukrainian war in the Donbass and outright anti-Russian propaganda.*” This article insinuates that it is Ukraine that is waging war against the Russian Federation in the Donbas and spreading anti-Russian propaganda, and that the French taxpayers are financing such efforts.
- On 14 June 2019, the online newspaper L'Humanité published in French an article “*Ukraine: Zelenskiy, and after?*”, which states the following: “*The euphoria of the overwhelming victory of the novice Zelenskyy should not overshadow the emergence of a nationalist, anti-Russian, and xenophobic extreme right, which surfed the post-Maidan Ukrainian power. Thus, the most disturbing phenomenon is the rise of neo-Nazi radical ideologies in the heart of a former communist state. The lessons of history have not been retained.*” This article repeats the traditional false accusation that the governing authorities of Ukraine are radical and xenophobic.
- On 4 July 2019, the AgoraVox site published in French an article entitled “*The collapse of power in Ukraine has begun,*” which states the following: “*The devaluation of the presidential power further accelerates the disintegration of the Ukrainian state. If the president is considered a puppet, there will be commotion and disintegration. And this agitation takes shape in the battles around the composition of the Verkhovna Rada. In Ukraine, the oligarchs who, through the President, already have contractual relations with each other and with foreign heads of state, are governing more and more openly. Ukraine, which previously had no sovereignty, is now openly transformed into a fuzzy territory, whose mandate is exercised by outside actors, and it is they who determine whether or not to start disintegration of the territory of Ukraine.*” This article attempts not only to belittle the presidential power and the new composition of the Verkhovna Rada but also to portray Ukraine, once again, as a corrupt and failed state.
- On 22 July 2019, commenting on an interview with a political scientist on Russia-24 TV channel, the English-language website Fort Russ calls Ukraine “*a playground for political experiments,*” claiming that “*Ukraine’s senior partners in Washington determine the brink of what is possible, huddling in Ukrainian political characters into a special “corridor of possibility”. This makes it difficult, if not impossible, to stay in line with the promised election slogans during their campaigns.*” This article continues to disinform that Ukraine is not a sovereign country but simply a political experiment of Washington.
- On 22 July 2019, news website Regnum published an article in Russian titled “*The Rada Elections have been called the most closed in history,*” which quotes a Russian official as saying that “*The elections to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of 21 July were the most closed ones in the entire history of the republic [...] Judging by the number of violations, the 21 July procedures cannot be called elections.*” This article accentuates that the violations on 21 July 2019 were so severe that one cannot even call Ukraine’s Parliamentary Election – an election.

In sharp contrast to the abovementioned narratives, the preliminary assessments by reputable international observation missions including ODIHR OSCE, ENEMO, CANADEM, NDI, and the European Parliament have unequivocally signaled that Ukraine conducted a fully democratic election. For example:

ODIHR OSCE: *“Ukraine’s early parliamentary elections were efficiently run and respected fundamental freedoms.”*

ENEMO: *“Elections were held in a competitive and generally peaceful environment, despite tight deadlines and remaining shortcomings in the legislation. Election administration functioned in an overall transparent and efficient manner.”*

CANADEM: *“Ukrainians have affirmed their commitment to democratic development by electing a new parliament in an election that largely met international democratic standards.”*

NDI: *“For the third time in four months, Ukraine held democratic elections. Despite a war and a punishing timeline, government officials, election administrators, political parties, candidates, election observers, and citizens collectively delivered an election that complied with Ukraine’s laws, meets international standards, and reflects the will of voters. This is a remarkable achievement.”*

The European Parliament election observation delegation to Ukraine: *“[...] one can undoubtedly say that they [the elections] were competitive, well administered and managed in an efficient way.”*

On the basis of LTO media-monitoring and analysis, the UWC Mission affirms the existence of widespread disinformation about the Parliamentary Election and Ukraine in general.

The UWC Mission sincerely thanks all of its LTOs, as well as all experts and analysts with whom it has cooperated in collecting and analyzing disinformation narratives.

The UWC Mission will present all of its findings with respect to media monitoring in its Final Report in 8 weeks after the conclusion of the Parliamentary Election.

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