



For immediate release

PRESS RELEASE

Ukraine concludes free and fair presidential election, affirming democratic change in the face of foreign aggression

Kyiv, 22 April 2019

Today, Mission Canada 2019 issued its second Preliminary Statement of Findings of the 2019 Presidential Election in Ukraine after analyzing all aspects of the electoral process between the first and the second round of elections, and the voting and counting procedures on Election Day.

The Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, Head of Mission, stated: “Ukrainians have affirmed their commitment to democratic development and have now chosen their new president in a democratic election.”

The mission found that sufficient measures were implemented to protect the integrity of the vote. Through the period leading up to the second round, the campaign was peaceful, and the overall coordination on election-related security matters between law enforcement agencies continued effectively.

However, Mission Canada has some concerns. The participation of 1.6 million internally displaced persons and the changing of temporary voting address remained problematic. As well, Mission Canada continued to note the low number of women in the political process and the absence of women’s voices and concerns in the campaign.

The definition of campaigning in the media as well as campaign financing remain opaque. The high concentration of media ownership by a few interests continued to shape the information space and voters’ access to information. The mission noted disregard for the quiet period by one of the candidates.

On this occasion, the mission would like to congratulate the Central Election Commission, as well as District Election Commissions and Precinct Election Commissions for conducting a well-organized voting day where voters were able to cast their ballots with confidence. The mission would further like to recognize the outstanding commitment and work of over half a million citizens who volunteered, worked and took part in the preparations for the entire electoral process. As a result, the second round of elections were fair and met international standards for democratic elections.

The Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, Head of Mission stated: “Debates between candidates are an important part of the democratic process. They are part of the democratic tradition. The people of Ukraine should be able to familiarize themselves with candidates’ platforms and their respective visions for the country. In the interest of the people and future elections, we hope that candidates will respect this expectation.”

The mission noted that organizing the stadium debate was a unique event, but doing so on the last evening of the campaign, prior to the quiet period, did not leave sufficient time for meaningful analysis and commentaries on the candidate’s platforms.

During the run-off, there were clear examples of campaigns ignoring the media. There is a need for serious public examination of campaign platforms. As we see around the world, the ability of the media to interact with candidates and report on their platforms is a fundamental principle and must be honoured.

Key issues observed during the run-off were hybrid warfare, the spread of disinformation, and the use of “black PR” by competing candidates’ teams.

The run-off presidential election in Ukraine was held within the context of an armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine. Voters in Crimea and parts of Donetsk and Luhansk faced difficulties exercising their democratic rights due to the illegal occupation by the Russian Federation. At the time of the election, Ukraine remained effectively at war with continued violence in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. Mission Canada 2019 is concerned with the difficulties voters continued to face during voting in Ukraine’s temporarily occupied territories.

“The mission congratulates the incredibly committed citizens of Ukraine who participated in every step of the election process, as candidates, as their representatives, members of district and precinct electoral commissions, security forces, civil society, observers and voters”, stated the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy. This is an especially notable achievement in the face of aggressive outside interference.

Mission Canada 2019 observed the entire electoral process and will continue to follow the response to the presidential election’s results and possible legal challenges. The mission will continue its independent role of election observation in the forthcoming parliamentary elections.

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For the second Preliminary Statement of Findings follow:

<https://www.canademmissions.ca/media-news>

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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.