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PRESS RELEASE

Ukraine's highly competitive presidential election meets international standards

Kyiv, 1 April 2019

Today, Mission Canada 2019 issued its Preliminary Statement of Findings of the 2019 Presidential Election in Ukraine after analyzing all aspects of the electoral process to date, including the pre-election period and the voting and counting procedures on election day. On this occasion, the mission would like to congratulate the Central Electoral Commission, as well as DEC's and PEC's for conducting a well-organized voting day where voters cast their ballots with confidence knowing that their voices will be heard. The mission would also 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 election. As a result, the elections were fair, met international standards for democratic elections, and should generate confidence in voters - according to our first assessment.

There are however, some systemic concerns that need to be addressed - noted in the mission's Preliminary Report – as follows: change of legislation in IDPs' participation, opaque campaign financing, high concentration of media ownership by a few interests, and some candidates not observing campaign media rules.

For the Preliminary Statement of Findings follow: <https://www.canademissions.ca/media-news>

The Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, Head of Mission stated: "We congratulate 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. I am impressed by how well the voting was conducted."

The 2019 Presidential election in Ukraine was held within the context of an armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine, and voters in Crimea and parts of Donetsk and Luhansk faced difficulties exercising their democratic rights due to illegal occupation by the Russian Federation. At the time of the election, Ukraine remains effectively at war with continued violence in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. Mission Canada 2019 is concerned with the difficulties voters faced during voting in

Ukraine's temporarily occupied territories and will keep observing the measures aimed at helping Internally Displaced Persons' (IDPs) registration and participation in the electoral process.

In spite of these hardships, the presidential election conducted on March 31 set a good base, leading to confidence in the election system for the next round of elections. In the event of challenges to the results, the mission is confident that aggrieved parties will use the established legal system for the adjudication of disputes.

"Key issues of the election concerned hybrid warfare, the spreading of disinformation during the campaign and the cybersecurity of the election process. We note that authorities took a proactive approach, and security agencies successfully provided physical and cyber security for the election, pre-empting large-scale manipulation, disruption and provocations." – said the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy.

"Ukraine's election environment has been profoundly competitive and the choices available to voters are a testament to Ukraine's vibrant democratic space. The election system provided for organizing fair elections and contributed positively to Ukraine's ongoing democratic process. The conduct of this election can reassure Canada that its democratization support is addressing key issues such as foreign interference in elections and cyber threats" – added Dr. Axworthy.

Olya Odynska-Grod, Deputy Head of Mission emphasized: "We welcome the high number of female members working tirelessly in all levels of the electoral administration. However we note that gender issues have largely been absent from the programs of the presidential candidates."

Canada's 160-strong bilateral election observation mission has been on the ground in varying stages since January 2019, observing election procedures in all regions of Ukraine in which voting took place. The mission observed candidate and voter registration, campaign activities, the work of the election administration, the participation of civil society, security preparations, the media and information environment, as well as the adjudication of election related disputes.

Mission Canada 2019 remains in Ukraine for the duration of the entire electoral process and will continue observing the response to the results and possible legal challenges. A final report with recommendations for future elections will be released in approximately two months after completing the electoral cycle.

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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. They have 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.