

**CONCLUSION**  
**of Observer Team of Interparliamentary Assembly of**  
**Member Nations of the Commonwealth of Independent States**  
**at Elections to House of Representatives of National Assembly of Republic of**  
**Belarus of Seventh Convocation**

**November 17, 2019**

On August 5, 2019 President of the Republic of Belarus A. G. Lukashenko signed Decree No. 294 on holding elections to the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus of the seventh convocation on November 17, 2019.

On August 8, 2019, Interparliamentary Assembly of Member Nations of the Commonwealth of Independent States received an invitation from Speaker of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus, V. P. Andreychenko, to participate in monitoring the elections to the House of Representatives of the National Assembly Republic of Belarus of the seventh convocation.

A group consisting of 46 international observers from the IPA was formed for monitoring. The group included deputies and representatives of the highest legislative bodies of the nine IPA CIS Member Nations: the Azerbaijan Republic, the Republic Armenia, the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan, and also employees of the IPA CIS Council Secretariat. In accordance with the order of Chairperson of the IPA CIS Council, Speaker of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation V. I. Matvienko, the First Deputy Speaker of the Majlisi namoyandagon of the Majlisi Oli of the Republic of Tajikistan A. A. Azizi was appointed the coordinator of the observer team at the elections to the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus..

In their activities, international observers from the IPA CIS were guided by the documents adopted within the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States concerning the organization of international monitoring of elections in the Commonwealth countries, the principles of political neutrality, objectivity, strict compliance with electoral legislation and non-interference in the internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus.

In order to provide reference and analytical materials, organizational and technical support for activities of the international observer team and ensure the successful work of the representatives of the parliaments participating in the monitoring, the group included staff members of the IPA CIS Council Secretariat and experts of IPA CIS IIMDD.

## **The Republic of Belarus Legislation regulating elections to the House of Representatives of the National Assembly**

The legislative basis for holding elections to the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus (elections to the House of representatives) is the Constitution, the Electoral code, the Mass Media law and the law on Mass Events in the Republic of Belarus. The Central Commission of the Republic of Belarus for Elections and Holding Republican referenda (CEC) has the right to adopt resolutions and other acts on the application of the norms of the Constitution and the Electoral code. In the run-up to elections the CEC adopted a number of subordinate acts that additionally regulate the procedures in the framework of the electoral process.

Elections to the House of Representatives are held on the basis of universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot in single-member constituencies. Active suffrage is granted to the citizens of the Republic of Belarus who by the day of voting have reached the age of 18. Citizens recognized by the court as legally incapable, who are, by the court's verdict, held in detention facilities, and persons for whom a preventive measure in the form of detention has been chosen, do not take part in the voting.

Regarding the results of the performed analysis of the Republic of Belarus electoral legislation regulating elections to the House of Representatives for its consistency with international standards for democratic elections, the experts of the IPA CIS IIMDD concluded that the legal regulation on the preparation and conduct of the elections complies with the main international standards in the field of democratic elections. The national legislation contains the basic regulatory prerequisites that allow to organize and conduct parliamentary elections based on a system of independent electoral bodies on the basis of universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot; to respect the rights of citizens and their associations exercised during elections, and maintain the transparency of the electoral process.

## **Administrative and Organizational Support of Elections to House of Representatives**

The preparation and conduct of elections to the House of Representatives is carried out by election commissions, united in the system which includes the CEC, territorial, district and precinct election commissions.

The CEC operates on a permanent basis. Subordinate election commissions are formed on a voluntary basis by the relevant executive committees and include representatives of political parties, republican public associations, labor collectives, as well as citizens nominated to the commissions by submitting applications.

During 2019 election campaign, 7 territorial, 110 district, and 5831 precinct election commissions operated on the territory of the Republic of Belarus. In accordance with the law, voting was also held at 46 polling stations abroad at the diplomatic missions and consular offices of the Republic of Belarus on the territories of 38 foreign countries. More than 60 thousand people worked in election commissions at all levels.

After the formation of the election commissions, training activities for their chairmen, deputy chairmen and secretaries, as well as for leaders of local executive bodies were started. In the course of the seminars and trainings, terms of reference of responsible

officials and the order of their interaction during the election campaign were clarified. IPA CIS observers note that the CEC timely issued and distributed the required methodological materials for members of election commissions.

The CEC provided full and complete information support for the elections to the House of Representatives. The regulations governing the election procedure, rules for voter verification of personal data, and information and statistical data about the campaign were posted timely on the Commission's website. Chairperson of the CEC L. M. Yermoshina regularly delivered video messages covering the main stages of preparation for the elections.

In the elections to the House of Representatives on November 17, 2019, the district election commissions registered 560 candidates for deputies, including those nominated by: citizens by collecting signatures — 81; labor collectives — 38; political parties — 325; two subjects of nomination (citizens by collecting signatures and labor collectives) — 84; two subjects of nomination (citizens by collecting signatures and political parties) — 31; three subjects of nomination — 1. During the campaign, the number of candidates reduced, and as of election day amounted to 515 people.

According to the results of compiling voter lists for voting in the elections of deputies of the House of Representatives, the total number of voters was determined as 6,880,605 people.

National observers effectively ensured the transparency in the process of preparing and conducting elections. In total, on election day about 30,000 people were accredited as observers in election commissions of all levels. At the same time, the activities of observers resulted in an increase in the workload on commissions of all levels, which was caused by the preparation of responses to requests and the need to monitor compliance with the terms of their consideration. The growing activism of civil society, along with the unsettled practical activity of public monitoring of elections and the lack of requirements and standards for objective reasons that determine the minimum threshold of legal literacy for national observers and authorized representatives of candidates, in some cases led to excessive use of their rights.

The elections to the House of Representatives was monitored by 1027 international observers accredited by the CEC. The Mission of the Commonwealth of Independent States consisted of 475 observers including a group of 46 observers from the IPA CIS.

As shown by long-term observation, all the procedures provided for in the Timetable of organizational measures for the preparation and conduct of elections were carried out within the established time frame in accordance with the electoral legislation of the Republic of Belarus.

### **Campaign Period**

In accordance with the provisions of national legislation, the election campaign of candidates for deputies of the House of Representatives was held from October 18 to November 16, 2019.

Most candidates in full used the legal right to conduct a campaign in the media, as well as through public events in public places. Election materials of competitors were placed in the places provided by the law. Information about candidates prepared by the district

election commissions was delivered to voters along with a notification of the place and time of voting in the elections.

In the course of the long-term monitoring, it was found that the leading mass media of the Republic of Belarus daily informed citizens of the country about the preparations for the voting, covering in detail the topics related to the activities of the CEC, territorial, district and precinct election commissions. Within the time period established by law, the programs of registered candidates for deputies were published in the print media. An important event during the campaign was the television debate of candidates for deputies, which were broadcast on the "Belarus 3" and "STV" television channels.

International observers from the IPA CIS did not find any facts of restricting access to the media for political reasons or interference of state (local) authorities in the election campaign.

During the election campaign, observers recorded cases of appeals and complaints about the quality of the election administration, that were submitted to the courts, election commissions, local representative bodies as well as executive committees, performing administrative functions. Out of a total 938 appeals received, 361 were sent to the CEC; 158 appeals were submitted to the Regional and the City of Minsk election commissions. Appeals and complaints were considered promptly by the relevant authorities, the election campaign being generally calm and constructive.

### **Long-term Monitoring**

As part of the long-term monitoring, from 15 to 18 October, 2019 members of the IPA CIS international observer team paid a working visit to the Republic of Belarus.

Vitebsk Regional Executive Committee and the Regional Election Commission informed members of the monitoring group about the activities of the election commissions in the region and the training of their members. While visiting the district election commissions in Minsk and Vitebsk, the observers were given information about compiling and updating voter lists. In three district commissions they attended meetings, devoted to considering the submitted documents and making decisions on the registration of candidates.

During their meeting with the senior executives of Gorodok and Senno District Election Commissions in Vitebsk region, the group members got acquainted with the specific features of elections in rural areas. In Vitebsk district, they attended a training session for precinct commissions and observed the application of a specially developed business games system and tests for organizing the main stages of elections, including early voting and counting votes.

On October 17 and 18, 2019, in Minsk, the observers had meetings with the leaders of major political parties and public associations that had nominated candidates for deputies. The leaders shared their views on the current election campaign, spoke about the nomination of candidates and preparations for agitation activity. The CEC and subordinate commissions activities raised no comments from the participants of the meetings.

During their visit to the Republic of Belarus, the IPA CIS observers evaluated the process of informing citizens on the upcoming elections and noted the applying of all

form provided for by the national legislation: distribution of printed materials, placement of advertising posters and billboards, TV and radio broadcast of the information about the upcoming elections. Upon completion of the registration of candidates on October 17, 2019, members of the group had the opportunity to observe the beginning of the candidates' campaign.

### **Short-Term monitoring**

On November 15-16, 2019, as part of the short-term monitoring, the IPA CIS international observer team held a series of meetings with organizers and participants of the election campaign.

In the course of his meeting with observers in the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus, its Speaker M. V. Myasnikovich noted the growth of activities of the electoral process participants and interest in the elections at the Republic of Belarus compared to the previous campaigns. To confirm that he showed the data revealing the increased number of the registered candidates and accredited foreign (international) observers.

While monitoring the activities of election commissions at various levels, the IPA CIS observers team met the leaders of the Central Commission of the Republic of Belarus on Elections and Holding Republican Referenda as well as of Minsk Regional Election Commission. Chairperson of the CEC L. M. Yermoshina informed the team members in detail about the administration of the election campaign at the final stage. According to the CEC, the average number of candidates per mandate was about five. The election participants widely used Internet resources in their campaign.

At the meetings of the observers with the leadership of the Communist Party of Belarus, Liberal Democratic Party of Belarus, Republican Party of Labour and Justice, Republican Public Association "Belaya Rus" and Public Association "The Belarusian Republican Youth Union", the issues of nomination and registration of candidates, the activities of national observers from the above parties and associations were touched upon. They also discussed the most effective forms and methods of agitation during the campaign, the features of party building and the development of social and political movements in the Republic of Belarus at the current time, as well as specific features of conducting the election campaign under a majoritarian electoral system. The participants noted the high competition in the elections and active interaction between many candidates and their voters, often using modern information technologies.

Members of the monitoring group observed early voting at three polling stations, fully realized the compliance of the equipment of the voting premises and the implemented procedures with the election legislation of the Republic of Belarus. As of November 16, 2019, on average, more than 30% of the total registered voters participated in early voting in the polling stations covered by the monitoring, which is approximately the same as for the Republic of Belarus as a whole.

The heads of headquarters in general commended the activities of state authorities and administration of the election. However, in some cases they noted the use of local administrative resources during the campaign.

On November 17, 2019, the voting day in the elections to the House of

Representatives, the IPA CIS international observers monitored various stages of voting procedure: from opening polling stations to counting votes by precinct election commissions. Monitoring the election and count of votes, the observers visited in all four district election commissions and 147 polling stations located in the city of Minsk, Minsk and Grodno regions, as well as polling stations abroad in Baku, Yerevan, Kishinev and St. Petersburg.

All polling stations visited by observers in the regions where covered by the monitoring were opened in accordance with the electoral legislation of the Republic of Belarus no later than 8.00 local time. Voting procedures were performed in strict accordance with the electoral legislation of the Republic of Belarus. Every voter had the right to equal and unrestricted access to the polling station in order to participate in the expression of their will. The voting was carried out in properly equipped booths, which ensured compliance with the principle of secret voting and the requirement that no influence on the voters choice was allowed.

No facts of interference of administrative or law enforcement bodies in the work of election commissions were revealed at the polling stations, visited by international observers.

Authorized representatives of candidates, observers from public organizations and political parties, as well as members of international monitoring missions were in attendance in most of the voting premises covered by the monitoring. At the time of their visiting the polling stations, they did not make any substantive comments on the organization and conduct of voting.

In the course of the voting monitoring, the IPA CIS observers identified certain technical deficiencies that were not systematic and did not affect the outcome of the election.

On the voting day, the coordinator of the IPA CIS observer team A. Azizi and Secretary General – Head of the Secretariat of the IPA CIS Council D. A. Kobitskiy held meetings with the heads of missions of international observers from the OSCE PA, PACE and the OSCE ODIHR. During the conversation, the parties exchanged information about the work of their observers in the monitoring process. The coordinator of the IPA CIS observer team A. A. Azizi stressed the importance of the experience of elections monitoring by parliamentarians from the CIS Member Nations for improving the national electoral legislation. In addition, questions of continuing contacts between the CIS IPA and other international organizations in order to improve the methodology of the election monitoring and harmonize standards of monitoring were touched upon at the meetings.

**Based on the results of the monitoring, the IPA CIS observer team notes that the electoral legislation of the Republic of Belarus has provided the necessary conditions for holding democratic elections and observing rights of all participants in the electoral process.**

**At the stage of preparation for elections to the House of Representatives, election commissions carried out their activities in accordance with national legislation, based on the principles of transparency and openness.**

**The majority of candidates campaigned in a calm atmosphere, which provided**

**constructive discussion between the participants of the electoral process. Candidates for deputies of the House of Representatives were given equal access to print and electronic mass media.**

**During the elections organization and conducting, the state authorities of the Republic of Belarus secured the enforcement of the status of international monitoring missions and provided assistance in the implementation of their powers and authority.**

**Thus, in conclusion of the international observers from the CIS Interparliamentary Assembly, the elections to the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus, on November, 17 2019, were held in compliance with the rights and freedoms of all participants in the electoral process, were in accordance with generally recognized democratic principles and standards for organizing and conducting free, fair elections, as well as international obligations of the Republic of Belarus to ensure the rights and freedoms of all participants in the electoral process.**

A. A. Azizi	Kh. Abdunazar
Kh. N. Fatiev	Sh. A. Chulliev
V. M. Ovakimyan	U. A. Tursunov
A. A. Bektayev	D. A. Kobitskiy
S. V. Imasheva	A. M. Jafarov
O. A. Alybaev	A. M. Chilingaryan
В. I. Сулейманов	V. G. Kogut
A. V. Weinberg	N. A. Satvaldiev
K. K. Tajshev	I. Kh. Rakhimov
M. Bobobekova	E. V. Goloulina

Minsk, November 17, 2019