



Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

18 March 2018

OSCE/ODIHR NEEDS ASSESSMENT MISSION REPORT

6 – 9 December 2017



Warsaw
21 December 2017

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**RUSSIAN FEDERATION
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OSCE/ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission Report

I. INTRODUCTION

Following an invitation from the authorities of the Russian Federation to deploy a Needs Assessment Mission in connection with the 18 March 2018 presidential election, in anticipation of an invitation to observe the election, and in accordance with its mandate, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) undertook a Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) from 6 to 9 December 2017. The NAM included Alexander Shlyk, Head of OSCE/ODIHR Election Department, and Vladimir Misev, OSCE/ODIHR Election Adviser. The NAM was joined by Andreas Baker, Chief of the Executive Office of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

The purpose of the mission was to assess the pre-election environment and preparations for the presidential election. Based on this assessment, the NAM should recommend whether to deploy an OSCE/ODIHR election-related activity for the forthcoming election, and if so, what type of activity best meets the identified needs. Meetings were held with officials from state institutions and the election administration, as well as with representatives of political parties, potential candidates, media, and civil society. A list of meetings is annexed to this report.

The OSCE/ODIHR would like to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Central Election Commission (CEC) for their assistance and co-operation in organizing the NAM. The OSCE/ODIHR would also like to thank all of its interlocutors for taking the time to meet with the NAM and to share their views.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Russian Federation is a federal presidential republic. The Constitution defines it as “a democratic federal law-bound State with a republican form of government.” The president serves as the head of state and enjoys wide range of powers and responsibilities, and is directly elected for a six-year period. The forthcoming presidential election was called for 18 March 2018 by a decision of the Federation Council, which entered into force on 18 December 2017.

A number of changes in the election legislation took place since the last presidential election, some addressing previous OSCE/ODIHR recommendations. The most significant changes relate to voter and candidate registration, observers’ rights and transparency measures, such as introducing video cameras to record the process of voting, counting and tabulation. Overall, most of the OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed confidence in the legal framework governing the presidential election, while a number of them also raised concerns with regard to its implementation, including in key areas related to fundamental freedoms.

The election-related complaints and appeals may be lodged with the election administration and courts and if a complaint is lodged with both, the respective commission suspends the review of the complaint pending the resolution by the court. Several OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed reservations about the independence of the judiciary.

The election will be administered by a four-tier election administration: the CEC, Subject Election Commissions (SECs), Territorial Election Commissions (TECs) and Precinct Election Commissions (PECs). The CEC, SECs, TECs and PECs are permanent bodies serving five-year terms. Decisions of the higher-level election commissions are binding for the lower-level ones. A majority of the OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed confidence in the work of the election administration and, in particular, of the CEC. However, some concerns were raised by OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors about the independence and performance of the lower-level election commissions in different subjects of the Russian Federation.

Citizens over 18 years of age by election day, with the exception of those serving a prison term or recognized by a court as incapacitated, are eligible to vote. Voter registration is passive and voter lists are compiled based on a registration system linked to the citizens' residence. Some 112 million voters are registered to vote, including about 1.9 million residing abroad. OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors did not raise concerns with regard to the voter registration and the management of the voter list, although some of them pointed to the need for clear and precise instructions by the CEC to the lower level commissions for implementation of the newly adopted legal provisions and regulations for inclusion of the voters based on their temporary residence.

Potential candidates can be nominated by groups of voters or by political parties. As of 15 December 2017, a number of potential candidates announced their intention to run for the forthcoming election, including the incumbent president. While most of the OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors welcomed amendments to the legal framework that ease the candidate registration process, some expressed concerns about the opportunities for all potential candidates to collect signatures in an equal and unobstructed manner in all regions of the country. In addition, particular court decisions which might affect the registration of some of the potential candidates were noted by the OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors.

The election campaign starts from the day of nomination of candidates and ends one day before the election day. By law, all candidates are granted equal campaign opportunities and the use of administrative resources in campaigning is prohibited. According to the representatives of some of the potential candidates that the OSCE/ODIHR NAM met, candidates intend to campaign in print and broadcast media, as well as online, and to employ different campaign methods such as direct meetings with voters, rallies and campaign tents.

Campaigns can be funded from candidates' own resources, loans and contributions received from individuals, including cash donations in accordance with national legislation, and legal entities. The legislation establishes campaign spending limits, and candidates are obliged to appoint authorized representatives for financial matters and open a dedicated bank account. Candidates are obliged to submit financial reports to the CEC twice, with the submission of the registration documents and a final financial report within 30 days from the official publication of the election results. OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors did not express concerns regarding the legal framework for campaign finance.

The Constitution guarantees the freedom of expression and prohibits censorship. However, recently, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) expressed "deep concern about the media freedom situation" and noted that the recent amendments to the legislation might negatively affect freedom of information. The coverage of the election campaign in the media begins 28 days before the election day and the law obliges public and private media to provide equal opportunities to all contestants.

The legislation provides for observation of an electoral process by representatives of electoral contestants, media, international observers and observers appointed by civic chambers. The

amendments to the legal framework adopted ahead of the 2016 State Duma elections, which included restrictions on observers' work, do not apply to the presidential election. Positively, the provisions that require court decisions for removal of observers from polling stations were included in the legal framework governing the presidential election. Overall, majority of the OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors welcomed the measures aimed at increasing the transparency of the voting process and those that broadened the range of observers who can be accredited for the forthcoming election. However, some OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed concerns and reservations about the implementation of these provisions, in particular those related to the recruitment and independent observation by the civic chambers observers.

Most of the OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors emphasized the value of an OSCE/ODIHR election observation activity for the presidential election. Many of them also stressed the importance of a long-term and regional presence to cover all aspects of the process. Representatives of state institutions stressed the intention to conduct the electoral process transparently, in adherence to international standards for democratic elections, and welcomed observation by the OSCE/ODIHR. Many interlocutors viewed the OSCE/ODIHR observation activity as a means to enhance confidence in the electoral process. In considering an observation activity, the OSCE/ODIHR NAM has taken into account the various findings outlined in this report and the concerns expressed by stakeholders. These include issues related to the recently amended legal framework and its implementation, the process of candidate registration, administration of the elections at different levels, the conduct of the election campaign, the roles of the media and election observers.

Based on the findings of this report, the OSCE/ODIHR NAM recommends the deployment of an Election Observation Mission (EOM) to observe the 18 March presidential election. In addition to a core team of analysts, the OSCE/ODIHR will request the secondment by OSCE participating States of 80 long-term observers to follow the electoral process countrywide, as well as 420 short-term observers for the observation of election day procedures. In line with OSCE/ODIHR's standard methodology, the EOM would include a media monitoring element.

III. FINDINGS

A. BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

The Russian Federation is a federal presidential republic. According to the 1993 Constitution, the president serves as the head of state with a wide range of powers and responsibilities. Legislative power is exercised by the Federal Assembly, a bicameral body consisting of the Council of the Federation (upper house) and the State Duma (lower house).

The forthcoming election was called for 18 March 2018 by decision of the Federation Council which entered into force on 18 December 2017. In the previous presidential election held in March 2012, President Vladimir Putin won in the first round with 63.6 per cent of the votes. Following the last State Duma elections held on 18 September 2016, six political parties are represented in the State Duma. United Russia obtained 343 mandates and subsequently formed a government. The remaining seats were split between the Communist Party of the Russian Federation with 42 seats, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia with 39 seats, the Fair Russia with 23 seats, and the Civic Platform, Rodina and a self-nominated candidate hold one seat each.

Ahead of the last parliamentary elections, a number of amendments to different laws leading to restrictions to some constitutionally guaranteed political rights and fundamental freedoms were adopted. In July 2016, the State Duma adopted the so-called "Anti-terrorist Law" that gives wide powers to authorities to limit citizen's civil rights, withdraw citizenship, and access private telephone

and email communications.¹ In May 2015, amendments to different laws gave the authorities a right to declare foreign or international organizations as undesirable without a judicial procedure.² In December 2014, amendments were introduced to the 1994 Law on the Constitutional Court to entitle the Constitutional Court to declare decisions of international courts as unenforceable.³

The OSCE/ODIHR has most recently observed the 18 September 2016 State Duma elections. In its report on the last State Duma elections, the OSCE/ODIHR noted that the elections “were transparently administered by the Central Election Commission (CEC), while the performance of lower level commissions was uneven. The legal framework can serve as an adequate basis for the conduct of elections, but democratic commitments continue to be challenged and the electoral environment was negatively affected by restrictions to fundamental freedoms and political rights, firmly controlled media and a tightening grip on civil society. The liberalized party registration process has yet to result in distinct political alternatives, and the campaign was low-key. Local authorities did not always treat the contestants equally, and instances of misuse of administrative resources were noted. The election day generally proceeded in an orderly manner, but numerous procedural irregularities were noted during counting.”⁴

B. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The presidential election is primarily regulated by the Constitution, the 2002 Law on Basic Guarantees of Electoral Rights and the Right to Participate in a Referendum (the Law on Basic Guarantees), the 2002 Law on the Election of President of the Russian Federation (the Law on Presidential Election), and the Central Election Commission (CEC) resolutions.⁵

A number of changes in the election legislation took place since the last presidential election, some addressing previous OSCE/ODIHR recommendations.⁶ The most significant changes relate to voter and candidate registration, observers’ rights and transparency measures such as introducing video cameras to live-stream and record the process of voting, counting and tabulation.⁷ In addition, the grounds for reducing the number of voters per polling station were introduced, and amendments to the Administrative Code increased the fines for certain electoral violations. Overall, most of the OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed confidence in the legal framework governing the

¹ The Law “On Making Amendments to Different Legal Acts of the Russian Federation Introducing Additional Measures to Counter Terrorism and Ensuring Public Security” introduced amendments to a dozen of different laws.

² In addition, for participating in activities of an organization declared as undesirable, an administrative fine for citizens and legal entities is envisaged; repeated analogous administrative offences can result in a criminal case depriving individuals of liberty for up to six years. See the [Venice Commission Opinion on Federal Law No.129-FZ on Amending Certain Legislative Acts](#).

³ See the Council of Europe’s Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) [Opinion on the Amendments to the Federal Constitutional Law on the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation from 13 June 2016](#).

⁴ See [all previous OSCE/ODIHR reports on the Russian Federation](#).

⁵ Several other laws are applicable to the presidential election: the 2001 Law on Political Parties, the 2002 Law on State Automated System of the Russian Federation “Elections”, the 1991 Law on Mass Media, and the 2004 Law on Assemblies, Meetings, Rallies and Pickets.

⁶ The latest amendments to some of the laws pertinent to the presidential election were introduced in December 2017.

⁷ Voters can be included in the voter list based on their residence and not only on the basis of the permanent address, and absentee voter certificates that allowed voters to vote in any polling station in the Russian Federation were abolished. According to the OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors from the CEC, this provision might affect between 10 and 15 million voters. A number of provisions for disqualifying supporting signatures for candidate registration were removed and an earlier amendment to the law from 2012 significantly reduced the number of supporting signatures for self-nominated candidates (from 2 million to 300,000 signatures). For changes related to election observation see *Election Observation* section.

presidential election. However, a number of them also raised concerns with regard to its implementation, including in key areas related to fundamental freedoms.

The election-related complaints and appeals may be lodged with the election administration and courts and if a complaint is lodged with both, the respective commission suspends the review of the complaint pending the resolution by the court. Several OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed reservations in the independence of the judiciary.

The president is directly elected in a single nationwide constituency for a six-year period.⁸ If no candidate receives more than 50 per cent of the valid votes cast, a second round takes place between the two candidates who gained the highest numbers of votes.

C. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The election will be administered by a four-tier election administration: the CEC, Subject Election Commissions (SECs), Territorial Election Commissions (TECs) and Precinct Election Commissions (PECs). The CEC, SECs, TECs and PECs are permanent bodies serving five-year terms. Decisions of the higher-level election commissions are binding for the lower-level ones. Decisions of election commissions that are in breach of the law can be revoked by a higher-level election commission or a court, and a higher-level election commission can take decisions on behalf of the lower-level commissions.

The CEC has 15 members, with the State Duma, the upper house of the parliament, and the president each appointing five of them. The current composition of the CEC was appointed in March 2016. Among other duties, the CEC is responsible for issuing guidance and training lower-level election commissions. The SECs are established in each of the federal subjects. Half of their members are appointed by the subject's legislature and the other half by the subject's executive. The TECs and PECs are appointed by the respective higher levels of the election administration. By law, at least half of the members of SECs, TECs and PECs should be appointed on the basis of nominations by eligible political parties, and state or municipal officials should not constitute more than half of the members.⁹ In addition, each electoral contestant is entitled to nominate a member with an advisory vote to commissions at all levels.

The legislation provides for various voting methods, such as homebound voting, voting abroad and a possibility for early voting.¹⁰ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is responsible for organization of the out-of-country voting that will take place in some 350 polling stations abroad. OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors from the MFA and the CEC expressed concerns with regard to the conditions for voting in certain countries.

A majority of the OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed confidence in the work of the election administration and, in particular, of the CEC. However, some concerns were raised by the OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors about the independence and performance of the lower-level election commissions in different subjects of the Russian Federation.

⁸ A constitutional amendment from December 2008 extended the presidential term from four to six years. The law prevents an individual from holding more than two consecutive terms.

⁹ Each political party, electoral or other public association may be represented by only one member in an election commission.

¹⁰ Early voting is available only in cases where polling stations are located in inaccessible or remote areas and can be conducted during 20 days before the election day.

D. VOTER REGISTRATION

Citizens over 18 years of age by election day, with the exception of those serving a prison term or recognized by a court as incapacitated, are eligible to vote.¹¹ Voter registration is passive and voter lists are compiled based on a registration system linked to the citizens' residence. Citizens are included in a voter list for a certain precinct if they are registered as residing within its territory. Some 112 million voters are registered to vote, including about 1.9 million residing abroad.

Voter lists are prepared by TECs not later than 11 days before election day, based on the data provided by the heads of local administrations or other relevant administrative bodies. Voter lists should be delivered to PECs 10 days before election day and, in the case of early voting, no later than 21 days. Voters can be included in the voter list up to and on election day upon a court or a higher election commission decision. OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors did not raise concerns with the voter registration and the management of the voter list, with some of them pointing to the need of clear and precise instructions by the CEC to the lower level commissions for implementation of the newly adopted regulations for inclusion of the voters based on their temporary residence.¹² According to the new provisions, voters with temporary residence can submit an application to the election commission for inclusion in the list of voters at their location starting from 45 days before the election day until 2pm on the day preceding the election day. These voters will be excluded from the voter list at the place of their permanent residence. Information on the number of these voters will be published online and separately for each precinct.

E. CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

Potential candidates can be nominated by groups of voters consisting of at least 500 citizens or by political parties. Potential candidates can submit their nominations for registration during 20 days following the official announcement of the election. Following the submission of the registration documents, including collected supporting signatures, the CEC registers candidates within 10 days. Signature collection takes place between 80 and 45 days before the election day.¹³

As of 15 December 2017, a number of potential candidates announced their intention to run for the forthcoming election, including the incumbent president, as well as Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, Alexei Navalny, Sergei Polonski, Ksenia Sobchak, Boris Titov, and Grigori Yavlinsky, among others. The current legislation states that citizens with non-expunged or canceled criminal record, as well citizens with criminal records for grave or especially grave offences within the last 10 or 15 years, are not eligible to stand as candidates. In addition, the Constitution states that citizens who are recognized as incapable by a court, and citizens who are imprisoned under a court sentence, shall not have the right

¹¹ The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in [*the case of Anchugov and Gladkov v. Russia \(application no. 11157/04\)*](#), found that the Russian Federation violated Article 3 of Protocol 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) by depriving applicants right to vote regardless of the length of their sentence, of the nature or gravity of their offence or of their individual circumstances. As regards the implementation of the judgment, the Court considered that it was up to the Government to explore all possible ways to ensure compliance with the Convention, including through some form of political process or by interpreting the Constitution in harmony with the Convention.

¹² On 1 November 2017, the CEC adopted decision which further regulates and provides guidance for implementation of these provisions.

¹³ A self-nominated candidate must collect at least 300,000 signatures. Non-parliamentary political parties are required to collect at least 100,000 signatures, while parliamentary parties can submit candidate nominations without signature collection. Supporting signatures should be collected in at least 40 different Subjects of the Russian Federation, with no more than 7,500 for self-nominated candidates and no more than 2,500 for candidates nominated by political parties in each of them. A total of 74 political parties are eligible to put forward nominations for candidates.

to elect and be elected.¹⁴ In December 2016, Alexei Navalny announced his intention to register as a candidate. On 8 February 2017, the Leninsky district court of Kirov repeated its earlier decision which charged Mr. Navalny with a five-year suspended sentence.¹⁵ Many OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors noted that Mr. Navalny's registration as a candidate may be problematic due to this court decision.

While most of the OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors welcomed amendments to the legal framework that ease the candidate registration process, some expressed concerns about the opportunities for all potential candidates to collect signatures in an equal and unobstructed manner in all regions of the country.

F. CAMPAIGN AND CAMPAIGN FINANCING

The election campaign starts from the day of nomination of candidates and ends one day before the election day. By law, all candidates are granted equal campaign opportunities and the use of administrative resources is prohibited. According to the representatives of some of the potential candidates that the OSCE/ODIHR NAM met, candidates intend to campaign in print and broadcast media, as well as online, and to employ different campaign methods such as direct meetings with voters, rallies and campaign tents. A number of the OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expected that foreign policy, as well as social and economic topics, will play an important role during the campaign.

Campaigns can be funded from candidates' own resources, loans and contributions received from individuals, including cash donations in accordance with national legislation, and legal entities. The legislation establishes campaign spending limits, and candidates are obliged to appoint authorized representatives for financial matters and open a dedicated bank account.¹⁶ Candidates are obliged to submit financial reports to the CEC twice, with the submission of the registration documents and a final financial report within 30 days from the official publication of the election results. OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors did not express concerns regarding the legal framework for campaign finance.

G. MEDIA

The Constitution guarantees the freedom of expression and prohibits censorship. The media landscape comprises numerous broadcast and print outlets, and an ever-increasing significance is placed on social media and the Internet. However, television remains the primary source of political information.

¹⁴ Following a complaint that challenged the constitutionality of the restrictions on the right to stand for election, on 10 October 2013, the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation, [decided](#) that the restrictions should contain time limits. On 21 February 2014, the State Duma adopted amendments that changed the indefinite period by 10 and 15 years limits for different type of offences. In a separate [resolution](#) from 9 November 2017, following a complaint regarding a potential candidate who was considered not eligible to stand for a municipal election in connection with a previous conviction, the Constitutional Court decided not to review the 2013 decision on the constitutionality of the restrictions. However, in a dissenting opinion, a Constitutional Court judge, noted [that the restrictions on the right to stand should be proportionate to the crime committed](#).

¹⁵ The court decision was initially adopted in December 2012. On 23 February 2016, [the ECtHR in the case Navalny and Ofitserov v. Russia \(application nos. 46632/13 and 28671/14\)](#) found that "that the criminal proceedings leading to their conviction for embezzlement had been arbitrary and unfair, and based on an unforeseeable application of criminal law. The Court found that the conviction of the applicants' co-accused in separate accelerated proceedings had deprived the applicants of basic guarantees of a fair trial. [...] Finally, the Russian courts had failed to address Mr Navalny's arguable allegation that the reasons for his prosecution were his political activities."

¹⁶ Campaign expenditures should not exceed 400 million rubles (approximately 5.75 million EUR).

Recently, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) expressed “deep concern about the media freedom situation.”¹⁷ Recent legal amendments obliged media outlets that receive funds from abroad to be registered as “foreign agents”. The RFoM assessed that these changes might negatively affect freedom of information.¹⁸

The coverage of the election campaign in the media begins 28 days before the election day and is mainly regulated by the Law on Presidential Election and the Law on Basic Guarantees. The laws oblige public and private media to provide equal opportunities to all contestants. All candidates and parties which nominate candidates and have won at least two per cent of the votes in the last parliamentary elections are entitled to free airtime on state-owned media.¹⁹ Paid political advertisement is allowed on public and private media. By law, print media and the news of all broadcast media must not give any preferences to any contestants and all candidates can buy paid political advertisements. The public media company (VGTRK) has 4 federal and 90 regional channels and broadcasts programmes in 54 different languages used in the Russian Federation. In addition to the pre-recorded political advertising by the candidates, the public broadcaster intends to organize different campaign programs, including interviews and debates with all candidates.²⁰

H. ELECTION OBSERVATION

The legislation provides for observation of an electoral process by representatives of electoral contestants, media, international observers and observers appointed by civic chambers.²¹ In addition, each candidate can also appoint up to 600 proxies, and a political party that nominates a candidate up to 100 proxies.

The amendments to the legal framework adopted ahead of the 2016 State Duma elections, which included restrictions on observers’ work, do not apply to the presidential election.²² Media representatives can be accredited as observers if they have had an employment contract with a media outlet at least two months before the official announcement of an election. Positively, the provisions that require court decisions for removal of observers from polling stations were included in the legal framework governing the presidential election.

¹⁷ In a [press release from 23 November 2017](#), the RFoM stated that “it is the government’s responsibility to ensure journalists’ safety and combat impunity of crimes against media workers. The situation is very alarming as journalists are increasingly confronted with intimidation, threats and violence as we have seen with the recent attacks.” In addition, the RFoM expressed concerns about the “amendments to legislation allowing authorities to block websites of so-called ‘undesirable organizations’ without a court decision.”

¹⁸ In a [press release from 16 November 2017](#), the RFoM expressed his concern about a series of measures by the United States of America and the Russian Federation requiring the media entities from other countries to register themselves as “foreign agents.”

¹⁹ Federal media can allocate at least one hour per day in national and at least half an hour per day in regional media to all contestants on working days during the 28-days period.

²⁰ According to the legislation, only registered candidates can participate on debates on the federal channels. However, in case of illness or performance of official duties, they can be substituted by authorized representatives.

²¹ The most recent amendments to the legislation from 5 December 2017, give the right to the [civic chamber of the Russian Federation](#) and the civic chambers of the Subjects of the Russian Federation to appoint election observers. The members of civic chambers are appointed by the federal or regional governments and the civil society organizations. Their purpose is to help citizens interact with government officials and local authorities in order to take into account the needs and interests of citizens, to protect their rights and freedoms in the process of shaping and implementing state policies, and to exercise public control over the activities of executive authorities.

²² The provisions that are still in place for other types of elections, among others require that no more than two observers for a political party and a candidate for parliament, with only one observer having the right to be present at the polling station at a time. In addition, the same person can be appointed as an observer only to one election commission.

Overall, majority of the OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors welcomed the measures aimed at increasing the transparency of the voting process and those that broadened the range of observers who can be accredited for the forthcoming election. However, some OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed concerns and reservations about the implementation of these provisions, in particular those related to the recruitment and independent observation by the civic chambers observers.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Most of the OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors emphasized the value of an OSCE/ODIHR election observation activity for the presidential election. Many of them also stressed the importance of a long-term and regional presence to cover all aspects of the process. Representatives of state institutions stressed the intention to conduct the electoral process transparently, in adherence to international standards for democratic elections, and welcomed observation by the OSCE/ODIHR. Many interlocutors viewed the OSCE/ODIHR observation activity as a means to enhance confidence in the electoral process. In considering an observation activity, the OSCE/ODIHR NAM has taken into account the various findings outlined in this report and the concerns expressed by stakeholders. These include issues related to the recently amended legal framework and its implementation, the process of candidate registration, administration of the elections at different levels, the conduct of the election campaign, the roles of the media and election observers.

Based on the findings of this report, the OSCE/ODIHR NAM recommends the deployment of an Election Observation Mission (EOM) to observe the 18 March presidential election. In addition to a core team of analysts, the OSCE/ODIHR will request the secondment by OSCE participating States of 80 long-term observers to follow the electoral process countrywide, as well as 420 short-term observers for the observation of election day procedures. In line with OSCE/ODIHR's standard methodology, the EOM would include a media monitoring element.

ANNEX: LIST OF MEETINGS

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Andrey Nesterenko, Ambassador-at-Large

Anna Maslova, Third Secretary of the Department of European Cooperation

State Structure and Legislation Committee of the State Duma

Alexander Gribov, Deputy Chairman

Ilya Mironov, Head of the Office

Olesya Sheludyakova, Deputy Head of the Office

Konstantin Lysov, Deputy Head of the Office

Irina Chukhlantseva, Counsellor

Central Election Commission

Nikolay Levichev, Member

Vasily Likhachev, Member

Vladimir Grachev, Deputy Chief of Staff

Alexey Kudachkin, Head of the Section of the International Cooperation and Information Department

Sergey Agadzhanov, Deputy Head, International Cooperation and Information Department

Julia Kudeneeva, Principal Adviser in the International Cooperation and Information Department

Political Parties and Potential Candidates

Grigory Yavlinsky, potential candidate and Chairperson of the *Yabloko* party

Konstantin Petrichenko, Head of international affairs department, United Russia Party

Natalya Pomozova, Deputy Head of international affairs department, United Russia Party

Andrey Osinnikov, First Deputy Head of regional and technological works, United Russia Party

Svetlana Pupynina, Deputy Head of the department for legal support of election campaigns, United Russia Party

Igor Malashenko, Head of campaign headquarters of potential candidate Ksenia Sobchak

Eldar Yanbukhtin, Head of campaign headquarters of potential candidate Boris Titov

Media

Piotr Fedorov, Russian Television and Radio Broadcasting Company

Zoya Matveevskaya, Russian Television and Radio Broadcasting Company

Maxim Nikishkin, Russian Television and Radio Broadcasting Company

Alexey Venediktov, Editor-in-Chief, 'Echo of Moscow', Member of Moscow Civic Chamber

Civil Society Organizations

Lyudmila Alekseeva, Chairperson of the Moscow Helsinki Group

Gleb Pavlovsky, President, Russian Institute

Dmitry Oreshkin, Election Expert

Grigory Melkonyants, Co-chair, GOLOS Movement

Arkadii Lyubarev, Member of Council, GOLOS Movement

Andrey Yurevich, Co-chair, GOLOS Movement

Stanislav Andreychuk, Member of Council, GOLOS Movement

Roman Udot, Co-chair of the Board, GOLOS Movement