

Resolution on the upcoming presidential election in Russia

2012/2505(RSP) - 16/02/2012 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the upcoming presidential election in Russia which will take place on 4 March.

The resolution was tabled by the EPP, S&D, Greens/EFA, ECR and ALDE groups.

It notes the OSCE/ODIHR and Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly's (PACE) reports on the Duma elections. The former states that the Duma elections of 4 December 2011 did not fully comply with free and fair election standards and were marked by the convergence of the state and the governing party and by a lack of independence of the election administration, partiality of the media and state interference at different levels. According to the report, the **Duma elections were characterised by a high number of procedural violations**, instances of apparent manipulation and serious cases of ballot box stuffing. Parliament stresses that whilst Russia's electoral legislation provides for appeal and rectification, the handling of complaints by the Central Election Committee has lacked transparency and has not addressed complaints effectively and in a timely manner. It regrets the fact that almost 3000 challenges regarding cases of electoral malfeasance, fraud and violations in individual districts have been rejected by the relevant courts and a few are still pending.

Parliament is concerned that the outcome of the elections (the composition of the Duma) will not bring improvements as regards the role and influence of the Duma within Russia's political system. It calls on its Delegation to the EU-Russia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee consistently to raise the issue of democracy, fundamental rights and the rule of law with the Russian counterparts. It also calls for an assessment of the activities of the EU-Russia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee, and the intensification of the dialogue with the non-parliamentary opposition and civil society.

Members call on the Russian Government to **introduce a package of legislative proposals, in compliance with the OSCE recommendations, aimed at developing a truly democratic political system** and including reforms to facilitate registration for both political parties and presidential candidates, and to address the restrictive application of registration rules, so as to allow genuinely free and fair elections as soon as possible. They recall that the **restrictions on political pluralism** during the preparations for Duma elections were one of the key flaws of those elections. Parliament expresses its concern regarding the **barring of opposition candidates from standing in the presidential elections on 4 March 2012**, which is once more undermining political competition and pluralism. It urges the Russian authorities to engage in dialogue with the opposition, and regrets the decision to deny registration for the presidential election campaign to Grigory Yavlinsky, which is also preventing his party from fielding observers.

Parliament notes President Medvedev's announcement on 22 December 2011 of comprehensive changes to the political system, including a much-needed simplification of the rules governing the registration of political parties. It calls for a serious commitment also to be made to addressing the problems of **media freedom and freedom of assembly** and expression. Members reiterate the EU's readiness to cooperate with Russia, including within the framework provided by the Partnership for Modernisation, in order to improve compliance with human and fundamental rights and the effectiveness of an independent rule of law system in Russia.

Noting that some 600 international observers are expected to monitor the Russian presidential election, Parliament stresses that international and national election observation missions should be fully deployed, in order to ensure efficient monitoring of the electoral process, in accordance with OSCE/ODIHR and Council of Europe standards. It calls on the Russian authorities to **avoid the interference and hindrance that was reported in the case of the Duma elections.**

Lastly, the resolution strongly **urge Russia to join the international consensus** to and to allow the Security Council to act on the basis of the Arab League proposals with a view to solving the Syrian crisis. It stresses that, as a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council, Russia needs to take its responsibility for international peace and security seriously, and it calls on Russia immediately to halt all arms and military equipment sales to the Syrian Government.