UCC Briefing Note

Supporting Ukraine's Democracy:
Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Ukraine, 2019

Policy Recommendations to the Government of Canada

November 2018

UCC policy recommendations to the Government of Canada

I. Elections and cybersecurity

1) Provide Canadian expertise and support to the process of securing Ukraine's cyber elections infrastructure, working with the Central Election Commission, law enforcement and other relevant state bodies.

2) Provide Canadian expertise and support to electoral actors on protecting their campaigns from cyberattacks. Ideally, this would be done in partnership with expert international NGOs such as National Democratic Institute, International Republican Institute, Carter Centre, etc.

II. Countering disinformation

3) Provide support to Ukrainian monitoring organizations dealing with countering disinformation – with a focus on projects/programs geared specifically towards the upcoming elections. There is an opportunity for Canada to coordinate support for these efforts with other key international partner governments.

4) Provide support to media monitoring organizations and domestic election monitoring organizations that focus on documenting and publicizing information about fake stories, manipulations in media, etc.

III. Ensuring right to vote in a conflict-affected state

5) Explore opportunities to provide support to the Government of Ukraine and relevant election administration bodies to ensure the effective access of the right to vote of over 1.5 million Internally Displaced Persons.

IV. Bilateral election observation mission

6) Undertake a bilateral observation mission with a focus on the deployment of Long-term observers (LTOs) who can observe the entire electoral cycle.

7) Ensure that the bilateral observation mission is substantial, fulsome and robust, with a suitable number of observers to observe the electoral cycle, campaign immediate election period, and post-election period.

The Issue

In 2019, two elections are scheduled to be held in Ukraine: presidential elections at the end of March (with a possible run-off three weeks later) and parliamentary elections at the end of October.

Canada has a long and successful track record of assisting Ukraine in its democratic development, providing technical assistance, and providing support to programming that builds capacity and resilience in democratic institutions.

I. Elections and cybersecurity

Given Russia's hybrid war against Ukraine, there is a real threat that actors (both state and non-state) controlled by Russia will attempt to undermine critical elections infrastructure (for example, State Voter Registry, Central Election Commission cyber systems, etc). International institutions such as IFES are already working with Ukrainian state bodies on these issues.[1]

Electoral actors (political parties, candidates for president, candidates for parliament, local NGO monitoring groups, etc) face a similar threat of cyber attacks against their political campaigns or civil society activities.

Recommendations:
1) Provide Canadian expertise and support to the process of securing Ukraine's cyber elections infrastructure, working with the Central Election Commission, law enforcement and other relevant state bodies.

2) Provide Canadian expertise and support to electoral actors on protecting their campaigns from cyberattacks. Ideally, this would be done in partnership with expert international NGOs such as National Democratic Institute, International Republican Institute, Carter Centre, etc.

II. Countering Disinformation

Ukraine is "ground zero" for Russia's targeted disinformation campaign. This campaign has spread in recent years to the West and support for extreme-right/left political forces in those countries. However, Ukraine is still the country that faces the most concerted efforts by the Russian state and non-state actors.

These interference efforts will increase as the Ukrainian election cycle progresses and the Kremlin seeks to manipulate news and undermine trust in institutions, political actors, etc.

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[1] IFES – Ukraine Cybersecurity Assessment Week.
https://www.ifes.org/news/ukraine-cybersecurity-assessment-week-2018

In addition to external disinformation campaigns, internal disinformation campaigns, including the planting of paid stories (jeansy) in supposedly objective media and other such activities are an internal issue in Ukraine's media landscape.

Recommendations:

3) Provide support to Ukrainian monitoring organizations dealing with countering disinformation – with a focus on projects/programs geared specifically towards the upcoming elections. There is an opportunity for Canada to coordinate support for these efforts with other key international partner governments.

4) Provide support to media monitoring organizations and domestic election monitoring organizations that focus on documenting and publicizing information about fake stories, manipulations in media, etc.

III. Ensuring right to vote in a conflict-affected state

Approximately 7% of Ukraine's territory (Crimea, parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts) are under Russian occupation. Russia's war against Ukraine in the east is ongoing. It is, unfortunately, likely that Crimea will still be illegally occupied by the time of the election and that fighting will continue in the East.

Russia's war against Ukraine has resulted in the internal displacement of over 1.5 million Ukrainian citizens, or internally displaced persons (IDPs). Ensuring their right to vote is a challenge for the Government of Ukraine.

Recommendation

5) Explore opportunities to provide support to the Government of Ukraine and relevant election administration bodies to ensure the effective access of the right to vote of over 1.5 million Internally Displaced Persons.

IV. Bilateral election observation mission

Given recent experiences in Canada's bilateral election observation missions in Ukraine (2004, 2010, 2012, 2014 presidential, 2014 parliamentary), the UCC recommends that the Government of Canada focus efforts on long-term observation of the election cycle.

Long-term observers (LTOs) are able to observe and report on all aspects of the election cycle, including, but not limited to:
- The electoral law;
- Electoral administration;
- Effectiveness of electoral dispute settlement and remedy;

- Voter registration;
- Candidate registration;
- Election campaign;
- Media environment;
- Campaign and election security;
- Post-election – vote tabulation process, settlement of complaints, announcement of results, etc.

Recommendations

6) Undertake a bilateral observation mission with a focus on the deployment of Long-term observers (LTOs) who can observe the entire electoral cycle.

7) Ensure that the bilateral observation mission is substantial, fulsome and robust, with a suitable number of observers to observe the electoral cycle, campaign, immediate election period, and post-election period.

ABOUT THE UCC
The Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) is the voice of Canada's Ukrainian community. It brings together under one umbrella all the national, provincial and local Ukrainian Canadian organizations. Together with its member organizations, the UCC has been a leading, coordinating and has represented the interests of one of Canada's largest ethnic communities (1.4 million) since 1940. It has been instrumental in shaping Canada's social, economic and political landscape and provides a high standard of leadership in developing and advancing the priorities of Ukrainian Canadians