

STATEMENT

Statement on the First Round of Moldova's Presidential Election and Constitutional Referendum

Date of Election: October 20th, 2024

Moldova held its first round of the 2024 presidential election alongside a constitutional referendum on October 20th. Despite a politically charged atmosphere with allegations of large-scale malign foreign interference and disinformation, the election day was conducted peacefully and efficiently. Election authorities and polling staff managed the process effectively while various domestic and international missions observed the elections.

The election was generally well-organized, with polling stations functioning according to the legislation. While local and international observers reported minor procedural issues and technical problems, they did not seem to have compromised the overall integrity of the election. Local observers noted instances of voter transportation to polling stations, campaigning near polling stations, and photographing of the ballots, but these were seen as isolated and non-consequential to the final outcome. The election authorities maintained transparency, providing regular updates on voter turnout and preliminary results.

Voter turnout was around 51.68%, and local and international observers were present at many polling stations, ensuring transparency and accountability.

The campaign period was notably less visible in public spaces compared to previous elections, with much of the outreach occurring online. While candidates generally had the opportunity to campaign freely, public debates were scarce, and some reports indicated the misuse of administrative resources. Additionally, various observers raised concerns about illegal financing linked to foreign actors.

Relatedly, the election period was marked by persistent efforts to influence the process through disinformation campaigns and attempts at foreign interference. These activities aimed to sway public opinion, particularly regarding the constitutional referendum on EU integration. While the government took significant measures to address these threats, including blocking several online disinformation sources, foreign influence remained a notable challenge throughout the campaign and the election.

Efforts were made to improve voter education, with widespread campaigns informing citizens about voting procedures. Accessibility measures were also enhanced, including postal voting for citizens living abroad in select countries. However, there were still some challenges, particularly regarding the accuracy of voter lists and limited accessibility at certain polling stations.

The first round of the 2024 presidential election and constitutional referendum was conducted peacefully and transparently. However, the election period highlighted several areas for improvement, particularly in addressing disinformation and ensuring greater accuracy in voter lists.

Key recommendations include:

- 1. Improving Voter Lists:** There should be a concerted effort to enhance the accuracy of voter records to prevent outdated or incorrect data from affecting future elections.
- 2. Addressing Disinformation:** Authorities need to strengthen strategies to counter disinformation, particularly online, to further safeguard the integrity of the electoral process.