



A voter in Ulaanbaatar registers to cast her ballot in Mongolia's presidential election, 9 June 2021 (OSCE/Keara Castaldo)

PRESS RELEASE

Candidates in Mongolia's election could campaign freely, but eligibility and media rules remain excessively restrictive, international observers say

ULAANBAATAR, 10 June 2021 – Mongolia's presidential election was well run in difficult circumstances and candidates were able to reach out freely to voters, but overly restrictive candidate eligibility and the blurred line between journalism and political advertising as well as the absence of public debate limited the range of choices and information for voters, international observers from the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) said in a [statement](#) today.

"We were glad to hear a high degree of confidence in the work of election commissions, and also to see that all candidates could campaign freely even though the pandemic largely ruled out face-to-face campaigning," said Lolita Čigāne, head of ODIHR's special election assessment mission. "However, the stringent rules on candidate eligibility, campaigning and editorial freedom are out of sync with international standards, and the lack of campaign finance transparency remained a matter of concern."

The legal framework has improved following changes made since the last presidential election, and form an adequate basis for democratic elections to take place. Nevertheless, a number of key ODIHR recommendations remain unaddressed. In the limited number of polling stations visited by the observers, the process was well administered and organized.

The election campaign itself was highly regulated, and the campaign period was shortened due to recent legal changes. At the same time, observers noted an apparent inequality of resources and the involvement of public officials in the campaign that increased the advantages of the ruling party.

Campaign financing was a further area of concern. Although certain improvements have been introduced to the process of submitting campaign finance reports, the overall framework for campaign financing lacks sufficient oversight and transparency, leaving voters under-informed about the sources of donations to contestants.

The media landscape is diverse. However, observers noted concerns about the lack of independence of many major outlets. While the media played an important role in informing voters about the election process, there were misgivings over the blurred line between news and paid content submitted by contestants. This limited the independent information available to voters about candidates and their programmes.

ODIHR's Special Election Assessment Mission to Mongolia took up its work on 21 May. The mission has focused on issues identified by ODIHR's needs assessment mission ahead of the election in order to assess the presidential election for its compliance with OSCE commitments and other international standards for democratic elections, as well as with national legislation.

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For PDF attachments or links to sources of further information, please visit: <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/489334>

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