

Beat: Politics

Putin orders Crimea elections, currency replacement

-, 28.05.2014, 03:36 Time

USPA News - Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday signed into law a decree ordering authorities on the Crimean Peninsula to hold regional parliamentary elections in mid-September, the Kremlin said. The decree also orders the peninsula to start using Russia's currency next week.

The decree established that elections to the State Council of the Republic of Crimea, the Parliament of the Republic of Crimea, and the Legislative Assembly of the City of Sevastopol, will be held on September 14. It follows a request by the legislative assembly last month to hold the elections in September instead of next year. Crimea is internationally recognized as an autonomous republic in Ukraine, but the peninsula has been under the control of the Russian Federation since March when residents in Crimea voted overwhelmingly to join Russia in a disputed referendum. Russia has received intense criticism and sanctions from much of the international community for its role in the crisis in Ukraine, specifically the annexation of Crimea. The Kremlin also said on Tuesday that the head of the Republic of Crimea and the Governor of the City of Sevastopol, the region's capital, will be elected by deputies of the State Council of the Republic of Crimea and the deputies of the Legislative Assembly of the City of Sevastopol no later than December. As part of the decree signed by Putin on Tuesday, the Crimean Peninsula will also cease to accept Ukraine's currency, the hryvnia, on Sunday. The new decree amends previous legislation that allowed for Crimea to accept both the hryvnia and the Russian ruble until January 2016. "The law establishes that the use of the Ukrainian monetary unit, the hryvnia, is permitted for payments on the territories of the Republic of Crimea and the Federal City of Sevastopol until June 1, 2014," the Kremlin said. It added that hryvnias will be exchanged for Russian rubles at the official exchange rate set by the Central Bank of Russia until Sunday, after which banks will be able to apply their own exchange rate.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-2248/putin-orders-crimea-elections-currency-replacement.html>

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