



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT ON ELECTION OBSERVATION

As delivered by Ambassador Guttorm Vik
(also on behalf of the delegations of
Canada, Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland)
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
5 March 2009

Madam Chairperson,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the delegations of Canada, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Switzerland and Norway. Much in the same vein as the Czech Republic, speaking on behalf of the European Union, we have to express our concern about what seems to be the state of play in the preparations for upcoming election observations. This applies notably to the unilateral appointment by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly of leaders for three observation missions before the CiO has appointed the Special Co-ordinators for the respective missions.

Madame Chairperson,

Let me recall that the method developed in the OSCE for election observation is one of this organisation's most important contributions to democracy in our region and in the world. This method is held in generally high regard and has high credibility, as demonstrated by the fact that the resulting assessments are the ones most often quoted in the media.

The methodology developed by ODIHR for long-term election observation, covering the whole process, including the electoral campaign, the handling of complaints and the electoral regulatory framework, is a key factor behind the confidence placed in OSCE observation results. Such confidence and trust is much more easily lost than gained.

Other actors, like parliamentary observers, have their own, very important roles to play, and an overall successful election observation mission is totally dependent on full cooperation between all the participants, notably ODIHR, the Parliamentary Assembly and the other associated parliamentary observer missions. ODIHR's data and observations collected throughout an electoral observation process form the basis of the OSCE's objective and technical assessment and the compiled results are shared with Parliamentary Observers and other OSCE partners. The Parliamentary Assembly plays a key role in raising public awareness on the democratic situation in a given participating state and in engaging at the political level to improve democratic and electoral systems.

Last year saw a number of very successful observation missions, resulting in objective, nuanced, and well-documented assessments. While some of the elections were flawed, the election observation assessments were not seriously contested. They served their purpose, delivering excellent tools for correcting the shortcomings identified. The most successful observation missions benefited from a satisfactory level of cooperation and coordination between the key players.

It is now very important not to jeopardise the trust and credibility laboriously won by OSCE election observation through many years of painstaking effort, as a result of destructive rivalries between the various complementary structures.

We appeal to all the parties concerned to refrain from seeking to expand their own role, at the expense of others, and to cooperate instead in good faith, fully respecting each other's roles and mandates, and scrupulously observing concluded agreements. A constructive attitude, openness to discussion and willingness to build on each other's value-added is essential to ensuring the maintenance of the high degree of credibility and public trust currently enjoyed by the OSCE and its Parliamentary Assembly.

Finally, let me welcome the announcement of an upcoming meeting in Athens and express our full support for the Chairmanship's efforts to facilitate the cooperation between the PA and ODIHR, aimed at strengthening the most valuable democratic tool of international election observation.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson