



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO AMBASSADOR JANEZ LENARCIC

As delivered by Ambassador Guttorm Vik
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
19 March 2009

Madam Chairperson,

Let me first join previous speakers in warmly welcoming Ambassador Lenarcic back to the Permanent Council and thanking him for his informative report and for his pertinent analysis of some salient features of the current situation for human rights, democracy and Rule of Law in the OSCE area.

All the participating States are equally bound by our commitments to the principles of democracy and human rights, and while substantive progress has been achieved in our area, the work is far from completed. ODIHR has a vital role to play, - not for the sake of naming and shaming, but in offering practical assistance, based on facts, to remedy shortcomings. That is why we believe it is so important to preserve ODIHR's autonomy and to strengthen its capabilities. I would therefore take this opportunity to again underline our responsibility to provide the resources necessary to make it possible for ODIHR to implement our recommendations and decisions in practice. This should particularly be kept in mind in our ongoing, and unfortunately seriously delayed, discussions on the 2009 Unified Budget.

Madam Chairperson,

We are heartened to note the increasingly positive response from the participating States to follow-up on ODIHR's election recommendations, e.g. Belarus, as mentioned

by Ambassador Lenarcic. Nevertheless, we still see fairly grave cases of non-observation of established standards in some countries. The very thorough, nuanced and well-documented election observation reports constitute essential tools for remedying shortcomings and perfecting electoral systems, even in mature democracies.

Let me once again commend the ODIHR for its well-developed methodology of observing “before, during and after” the elections, which has earned the OSCE much of the international standing and confidence that our election observation currently enjoys. Accordingly, this methodology must remain at the core of all future election observation missions in the OSCE region. The participation of election monitors from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and other Parliamentary bodies is also highly useful and complements the role of ODIHR. We commend Ambassador Lenarcic for his efforts to reach out to the PA and we commend the Chairmanship for its recent initiative to solve differences and promote cooperation and mutual understanding. Let me once again underline the need for all the institutions to cooperate fully and in good faith in the upcoming election observation missions, in *genuine partnership*, as stipulated in MC.DEC 19/06. Let me also emphasise how much we value the participation of other parliamentary election observers, notably from the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. The good cooperation achieved with these institutions must be preserved and developed further.

While still on the broad subject of elections, I would like to register my Delegation’s full support for the most substantial contribution possible in electoral support and cooperation with Afghanistan.

Madam Chairperson,

Norway applauds ODIHR for its continued focus on human rights defenders throughout our region. We need to protect human rights defenders like NGOs, lawyers and journalists. We must also uphold the principle that NGOs are indispensable

contributors in our partnership-based peer review and continue to give them access to our meetings and conferences in line with established practice.

Madam Chairperson,

The joint ODIHR/HCNM report on the worrying human rights situation in the war-affected areas in Georgia clearly underscores the need for a continued OSCE presence throughout the country. We again encourage all sides to implement the recommendations and would welcome a follow-up visit by ODIHR and the HCNM. Let me also second the proposal just made by the EU to schedule further discussions on some of the important aspects of the already existing, very substantive report.

Finally, Madam Chairperson,

Norway looks forward to participating in the interesting activities we have now agreed upon, and to continuing our close cooperation with Ambassador Lenarcic and his dedicated and competent staff.

Thank you, **Madam Chairperson**