



PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING 2009
Norwegian Statement for the Working Session 17: Democratic Institutions
As delivered by Senior Adviser Birgit Kleven,
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Warsaw, 8 October 2009

Mr. Moderator,

Free and fair elections are the cornerstone of any democracy, and the commitment to organising such elections is arguably the most important commitment that the participating States have undertaken. Democratic elections are, as Ambassador Lenarcic so rightly pointed out, closely linked to other fundamental rights, such as the freedom of expression, the freedom of assembly and the freedom of association. Regrettably, elections in some participating States fall short of meeting the international standards that we all have committed ourselves to.

Mr. Moderator,

Institutions like the ODIHR have a vital role to play in offering practical assistance to remedy such shortcomings. Impartial and thorough international election observation is an important tool to ensure that commitments are being met and also a valuable tool for participating states to identify and remedy shortcomings. The method developed in the OSCE, which covers the whole process, has by and large fulfilled its purpose and is held in high regard internationally. It has been constantly refined and improved, and must continue

to be a living organism, capable of adaptation to face up to new challenges. We do not believe that a new set of rules, severely limiting ODIHR's activities and subjecting Election Observation Missions to decisions by the Permanent Council, would improve the excellent tool that our elections observation has developed into. What we do believe, Mr. Moderator, is that the very effectiveness of OSCE institutions can only be guaranteed if they retain their autonomy of action and we should all work wholeheartedly with the ODIHR and support its efforts.

The inclusion of election monitors from various Parliamentary Assemblies is highly appreciated and we are encouraged by reports indicating that the cooperation between the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the ODIHR has been steadily improving during the latest Election Observation Missions.

Finally, we would once again like to praise ODIHR for having implemented Brussels decision 19/06 and broadened the geographic scope of Election Observation Missions. This has clearly strengthened the legitimacy of this instrument. It is important that the commitment to organise democratic elections are implemented throughout our region, and that the ODIHR is involved in the whole election process. Even well-established democracies, such as the Norwegian, have things to learn from ODIHR. We found their Needs Assessment Mission in June interesting and useful and we are looking forward the report following the Election Assessment Mission during our Parliamentary elections in September.

Thank you Mr. Moderator