



Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'Homme

ORGANISATION INTERNATIONALE NON GOUVERNEMENTALE AYANT STATUT CONSULTATIF AUPRES DES NATIONS UNIES, DE L'UNESCO,
DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE ET D'OBSERVATEUR AUPRES DE LA COMMISSION AFRICAINE DES DROITS DE L'HOMME ET DES PEUPLES

International Federation
for Human Rights

Federación Internacional
de los Derechos Humanos

الفدرالية الدولية لحقوق الإنسان

FIDH Oral intervention

OSCE – HDIM, Thursday, 8 October 2009, Working session 17

Democratic institutions including democratic elections

Mr. Moderator, distinguished delegates,

As the delegation of Norway stated earlier, free and fair elections are the corner stone of democracy. They are as well a necessary condition for security and a stable international environment.

The 1990 document of Copenhagen is considered to be one of the most complete and far reaching documents on elections internationally. At that time, this document seemed to be a model with an important impact at the level of the United Nations, the European Union as well as the Council of Europe. Reference to the principles and the norms integrated in this document, the famous OSCE *acquis* has been made even at other regional fora.

It is quite unfortunate that today this *acquis* is questioned by certain participating States which are trying to cover the deficiencies of their political and electoral system with criticism against the politics of ODIHR.

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) wishes to remind that the expertise of ODIHR in the electoral assistance and election observation field is recognized internationally. The work accomplished is maybe not above any comment but it does approach closely to the highest standards.

FIDH does agree with the assessment of some participating States that there is a need to broaden even more the scope of countries subject to election observation missions. There is no perfect democracy and indeed new technologies have posed new problems and challenges for each participating State.

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However the questioning of the election observation methodology of ODIHR and the request to have an interference to a process, which by definition should be independent and impartial, raises more concerns than constituting a solution.

FIDH wishes to draw the attention and we do insist on the fact that this type of criticism comes by participating States which have poor human rights record and again FIDH wishes to remind that the transition to democracy cannot be eternal and States, together with the international community must establish clear benchmarks to measure the progress made in particular in some crucial domains such as free and fair elections. We call upon participating States to give the opportunity to the local civil society, to independent associations and human rights organizations to operate freely and observe the process leading to elections and the elections as such, under the capacity of domestic observers. If some States believe in double standards, in that case their own citizens and civil society cannot be accused of serving foreign interests.

FIDH believes that main issues related to the follow-up of the ODIHR recommendations and actions are not properly addressed by the OSCE political organs. The Permanent Council should decide and establish benchmarks that the participating States should respect in order to make this process have a real impact on the national electoral process and the respect of rule of law at the domestic level. The question of non respect or absence of reaction to the ODIHR's recommendations should be brought up properly and timely at the Permanent Council and a constructive dialogue should be engaged on a regular, continuous basis. With such approach, the Permanent Council will support ODIHR in its difficult and political task.

Mr. Moderator, FIDH wishes to commend the efforts and the work done by the previous Finnish chairmanship and the current Greek presidency regarding the promotion of dialogue among participating States on election. We trust that the actual Presidency will intensify its efforts in this field before passing the next OSCE Presidency to Kazakhstan.

We are all here not to justify our policies or to defend the interests of governments but to defend the welfare of common people of the OSCE nations. Please engage your government's political will to make full use of his organization to promote peace, stability and democracy in the OSCE arena.

Thank you Mr. Moderator,

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