

DECEMBER 2004

OSCE
MAGAZINE

OSCE reform and political crisis in Ukraine
dominate Ministerial Council meeting in Sofia

U.S. Election 2004:
Americans try to make sense of the OSCE

High Commissioner on National Minorities:
The education solution



Afghanistan votes

The OSCE breaks new ground in a partner country



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Message from the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

It has been a very full election year for the ODIHR, the OSCE institution that has its origins in the commitments on democratic elections agreed in Copenhagen in 1990.



In 2004, we deployed some 3,500 people on 12 observation missions and three assessment missions. As the *OSCE Magazine* went to press, we announced details from Kyiv of our expanded Election Observation Mission in Ukraine for the repeat of the second round of the presidential election on 26 December.

Almost 150 election missions in the past decade — some of which attracted considerable media attention — testify to the vital role played by the ODIHR in assisting transition democracies all across Central, Eastern and south-eastern Europe.

More recently, we have also assessed elections in longer-established democracies, as in the United States in November. This autumn, the Organization expanded its election-related activities by sending an Election Support Team even further afield — for Afghanistan's presidential election.

Although ODIHR reports sometimes carry constructive criticism, I can guarantee that we strictly adhere to our election observation mandate, applying a consistent and objective methodology that was first introduced in 1996. The unique concept behind it has nothing to do with casual impressions. Long-term observers assess, in a comprehensive and effective manner, how national and international election commitments are implemented.

I underline the fact that ODIHR election observation reports do not speculate on the impact of observed election violations on the poll's outcome. In the monitoring and assessing of elections, the results are of concern to us only insofar as they are reported honestly and accurately.

Put simply, while our work is very much about politics, it is not politicized. We leave it to others to draw their political conclusions from the facts that we document.

As we in the ODIHR stand on the brink of another busy election year, I wish to thank every one of our observers from more than 40 countries for their professionalism and integrity. It is their dedication that is translating the ODIHR's election observation methodology into practical reality.

I hope the special election articles in this issue of the *OSCE Magazine* will contribute towards a better understanding of the work of these committed men and women.

Christian Strohal
Warsaw
December 2004

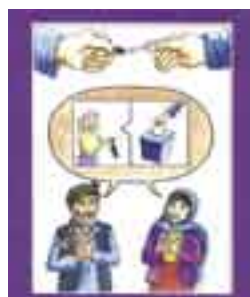
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Front cover: View from the bus transporting the OSCE's Election Support Team from the Kabul airport to the hotel. Back cover: Election billboards dotted the streets of Kabul and other big cities.
Photos: Alexander Nitzsche

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12TH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL MEETING

OSCE reform and political crisis in Ukraine dominate Sofia gathering

BY RICHARD MURPHY

SOFIA — The political crisis in Ukraine, following the country’s disputed presidential election, and the question of OSCE reform dominated discussions among OSCE foreign ministers at the 12th Ministerial Council meeting in Sofia on 6 and 7 December.

For the second year in a row, the absence of consensus on a number of key political issues meant the two-day meeting ended without an adoption of a ministerial declaration.

But the ministers did adopt 19 decisions on a range of issues, including fighting terrorism, curbing illegal small arms and light weapons, promoting tolerance and non-discrimination, and combating corruption.

The Chairman-in-Office, Bulgarian Foreign Minister Solomon Passy, recalled in his address how important the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe — the forerunner of the OSCE — had been to him and others of his generation as they

struggled for democracy in Bulgaria in the late 1980s.

He described the modern-day Organization as a vital instrument for ensuring security and stability in the OSCE region and an inspiration for other parts of the world. “I appeal to all the participating States to make full use of the OSCE as a key forum for political dialogue and co-operative security,” he said.

In the run-up to the meeting, the Chairman-in-Office had devoted considerable attention to the crisis in Ukraine — provoked by the second round of the presidential election on 21 November. OSCE observers said the election failed to meet a considerable number of OSCE commitments. Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets of Kyiv to demand that it should be repeated.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Kostyantyn Gryshchenko briefed his ministerial colleagues on the situation, while the OSCE Ministerial Troika — the Netherlands, Bulgaria and Slovenia — held informal talks

Bulgarian Foreign Minister
Solomon Passy hands
over the OSCE baton to
Slovenian Foreign Minister
Dimitrij Rupel.
Photo: OSCE/Svetoslav
Stanchev

with Boris Tarasyuk, a former Ukrainian foreign minister, who now chairs the parliamentary Committee on European Integration.

The Chairman-in-Office asked Secretary General Ján Kubiš to return to Ukraine on 6 December — his fourth visit in less than two weeks — to take part in a meeting of international mediators with the main political actors to help resolve the impasse.

In Sofia, clear differences were apparent among the ministers as they discussed perceived shortcomings in the work of the OSCE and the question of reform.

Belarusian Foreign Minister Sergei Martynov said: “The OSCE’s contribution to the formation of the system for comprehensive security in Europe is immense, obvious and unarguable. It is, however, equally obvious and unarguable that the Organization has been in an ever-growing deep structural and conceptual crisis.”

He added: “Rectifying geographical imbalances in the OSCE’s activities remains a pressing problem.”

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov warned that the OSCE could face an identity crisis and said it needed comprehensive reform. There was a major problem of “double standards” in election observation missions, and election monitoring was becoming “an instrument for political manipulation and a factor of destabilization”.

“Unfortunately, it must be said that the comparative advantages of the OSCE are being eroded,” Minister Lavrov said. “The Organization is not only ceasing to be a forum uniting States and peoples but also, on the contrary, is beginning to drive them apart.”

However, Dutch Foreign Minister Bernard Bot, speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that while the OSCE must continue to adapt to changing environments, this did not mean starting from scratch.

“On the contrary, the OSCE is firmly rooted in its three dimensions: politico-military, economic and environmental, and human,” he said. “The OSCE should evolve, but that implies moving on from what has already been achieved. It does not — and in the opinion of the European Union should not — mean undoing those achievements.”

U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, addressing his last Ministerial Council meeting before leaving office, said that the OSCE could be proud of the accomplishments of the Helsinki Process, but that the United States remained concerned by the “unfulfilled promises of democracy and respect for

fundamental freedoms in some OSCE States”.

“Some countries have recently argued that the OSCE’s field work constitutes interference in internal affairs, that the OSCE has ‘double standards’, and that the OSCE has concentrated its efforts in the former Soviet republics for political reasons. I categorically disagree,” he added.

Chairman-in-Office Passy noted that the ministers had again failed to agree on a joint declaration because of differences of opinion on issues such as Georgia and Moldova.

“In such a large Organization, we could not expect unanimity of opinion on all the issues,” he said. “In my opinion, it is better to acknowledge our differences frankly than to agree on some lowest-common-denominator language of little substance.”

“In the months and years ahead, we will continue to work intensively to achieve lasting settlements in Georgia, Moldova and Nagorno-Karabakh. Courageous decisions will be required from all the parties concerned and the OSCE must remain fully engaged.”

Mongolian Foreign Minister Tsendyn Munh-Orgil attended his first OSCE Ministerial Council meeting since the OSCE Permanent Council granted his country the status of OSCE Partner for Co-operation a week earlier.

Secretary General Kubiš, addressing his last Ministerial Council meeting before the end of his term of office in June 2005, said he had witnessed the evolution of the OSCE from an instrument for bridging Cold War divisions into a tool for building a united Europe on the basis of shared democratic values.

“We are much more operational, better organized and better managed than we were a decade ago. The OSCE missions and institutions are a proven success,” he declared. But he questioned whether the OSCE was sufficiently dynamic in responding to new security challenges without abandoning its common values and asked whether it remained relevant to all the participating States.

“We need to reinvigorate the OSCE as a forum for high-level political dialogue on the most topical issues of security in order to prevent the opening of new dividing lines in Europe,” the Secretary General added. “Only the OSCE can be a platform for a ‘Europe whole and free’, embracing equally our European, Central Asian and North American States.”

For more on the OSCE’s 12th Ministerial Council, see: www.osce.org/events/mc/bulgaria2004

Richard Murphy is OSCE Spokesperson and Head of the Press and Public Information Section.



Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell in Sofia
Photo: OSCE/Svetoslav Stanchev



Afghanistan votes

The OSCE breaks new ground in a partner country

Billboards showing presidential candidates Massouda Jalal and Hamid Karzai in Kabul's Karteh Parwan district
Photo: Alexander Nitzsche

BY ROBERT L. BARRY

On election day, 9 October 2004, the long drought in Afghanistan broke. Millions of voters waited patiently in rain and snow to cast their votes in the first-ever election for a Head of State. In Herat, hundreds of women barged into a polling station when its opening was delayed, much to the amusement of the police standing guard.

More than eight million Afghans — nearly three-quarters of the eligible voters — came out to cast their ballot despite threats to their lives by Taliban remnants and al-Qaeda. These were not empty threats, as evidenced by sporadic election-related violence all over the country, the discovery of caches of explosives and weapons on the eve of the polls and the kidnapping of three United Nations election personnel which could have easily ended tragically.

Thankfully, on election day itself, an extraordinary effort by the Afghan National Army, intelligence service and police, supported by NATO's International Security Assistance Force and the U.S.-led Coalition Forces Command, created a

secure environment.

The OSCE broke new ground in Afghanistan. For the first time, it deployed an election team to one of its ten Partners for Co-operation. The concept of hands-on election support was new, and obviously the unpredictable security environment posed serious challenges. The entire process of registering voters and preparing for elections in a war-torn country with a weak infrastructure was both dangerous and complex.

It was an emotional moment for Afghans, and it was gratifying to all of us who took part in this historic event that the OSCE figured prominently in its success. This was the view of President Hamid Karzai and the Afghan transitional Government, the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA), and the OSCE Permanent Council. In his letter of 15 November, the outgoing U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, also commended the “extraordinary contribution” of the OSCE's Election Support Team (EST).

CO-OPERATIVE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Devising a new concept of mission opera-

tions had proved important since many experienced election observers were more comfortable with the kind of detailed, arm's-length scrutiny usual in observation missions of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). The concept paper described the task as "a co-operative technical assistance mission", where the OSCE's constructive advice is actively sought and given.

Team members were encouraged to point out serious problems as they occurred and to make suggestions as to how to correct them. In drawing up recommendations, the Support Team concentrated on the parliamentary elections scheduled to take place in the spring of 2005. The OSCE teams were invited to work closely with their European Union counterparts, just as I worked closely with Richard Chambers, head of the EU election support team, and Francesc Vendrell, special representative of the EU in Afghanistan.

As expected, given the volatile security situation, the deployment plan shifted frequently depending on events and the ability of Global Risk Strategies, the OSCE's contracted security firm, to provide logistical support.

In the end, four two-person teams were assigned to Kabul, each with a distinct functional focus. Two-person teams were deployed to the regional centres of Bamyan, Gardez, Herat, Jalalabad and Kandahar, and to the provincial capital, Fayzabad. Two two-person teams were assigned to the regional centres of Kunduz and Mazar-i-Sharif. Most teams paired a man and a woman. On election day, EU and OSCE teams often merged so that we could send two-person female teams into polling stations for women.

ELECTION ISSUES

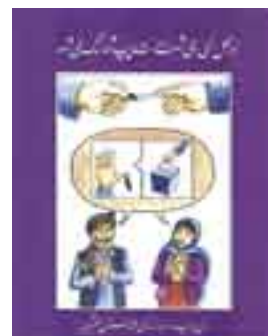
Immediately on arrival in the field, team members began meeting with party and candidate representatives, election administrators and domestic election monitors and human rights groups. While the OSCE's Election Support Team was a latecomer to the scene compared with the EU, we were able to orient ourselves quickly, thanks to the experience of our teams and the help provided by the EU, the UN and the election administrators — the Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB) and its secretariat.

Although there was much uncharted territory in a country which had never before elected a Head of State, and where the majority of voters were illiterate and had

only the vaguest notion of the meaning of democracy, a surprisingly high number of issues were familiar to us, since we had previously encountered them in elections in countries in transition:

- **Intimidation and secrecy of the vote.** Typically, candidates and their agents fuelled rumours that voters' choices could not be kept secret. Coupled with threats of retaliation by warlords and tribal leaders, this caused widespread concern. As a result, counting was centralized in eight counting centres around the country instead of being handled at the voting centres or at the provincial level.
- **Advantage of incumbency.** Hamid Karzai, who had been selected President by the emergency Loya Jirga in 2002 with the support of the United States and others, used his incumbency in ways criticized by his rivals, for example, by inaugurating aid projects financed by the international community during the month-long campaign period.
- **Impartiality of the election authority.** The incumbent's rivals were highly critical of the supposed pro-Karzai stance of the JEMB and its secretariat, whose Afghan members were appointed by the President — though on the basis of recommendations by UNAMA, which had been widely discussed in advance with interested parties.
- **Multiple voting.** During voter registration, it was clear that many Afghans had acquired more than one "voter card", the identification which, in the absence of a voter register, had to be presented by voters at polling stations. Although these multi-

UN voter education posters illustrating the voting procedure, including the finger-inking to avoid multiple voting (far right)





Voting on 9 October 2004 was relatively peaceful. Photos: Alexandre Marion, Stephanie Bleeker, Brian Steers

ple cards appeared to have been obtained by voters for various purposes, there was widespread suspicion that multiple voting would be orchestrated. The use of indelible ink had been advertised as “the last line of defence” against this scenario. This background set the stage for the election-day controversy revolving around the ink that was used in some polling centres.

- **Vote count.** Although the idea behind centralizing the vote count in eight centres was to protect the secrecy of the vote, it also created vulnerabilities regarding the transport of the ballots from polling stations to the centres and the security of the centres. In some cases, election materials had to be moved by donkey, which took up to five days in each direction.
- **Complaints and appeals.** In Afghanistan, the sword remains mightier than the pen, and there is no tradition to support the formal complaints procedures typical in OSCE participating States. The Election Support Team concluded at an early stage that procedures established to investigate complaints were inadequate, especially on election day.
- **Election administration.** To staff 22,000 polling stations, it was necessary to recruit and train more than 140,000 election workers, who took on significant personal risk, particularly where the Taliban or local warlords hostile to President Karzai’s candidacy held sway. Many candidates doubted the impartiality of election workers recruited by local community leaders (or “commanders”).

Faced with these concerns, the Election Support Team set out to reassure the candidates and their supporters that the polling process was designed to protect the interests of all. To this end, I gave a number of press interviews and statements stressing that the secrecy of the ballot was protected and that safeguards concerning the integrity of the process were in place. Kabul-based expert teams began sitting in on meetings of the JEMB and collecting information about complaints and appeals and how they were being dealt with.

ELECTION DAY

On the eve of elections, 8 October, reports were spreading that the Taliban and al-Qaeda were preparing to disrupt the election through suicide attacks, assaults on polling stations and the like. As the OSCE mandate did not require detailed monitoring in polling places, Support Team experts were instructed to begin visiting polling stations only after 9 a.m., by which time the developing security situation would have become clearer.

It was soon evident that voting around the country was taking place in an orderly, peaceful manner, with both men and women eager to have their say and patiently waiting in lines of sometimes up to more than a thousand people. In most polling places, OSCE experts and other monitors were hospitably welcomed by voters and administrators, who were obviously proud of their accomplishment in carrying out the first election of a national leader.

Team members saw little evidence of partisanship or intimidation; to most Afghans, the very act of voting seemed more important than who was elected. To the question of what results they wanted from the election, a frequent answer was “an end to the rule of the gun” and a curbing of the power of local “commanders” and militias.

The first signs of trouble came at mid-morning on 9 October, when the Joint Electoral Management Body and the OSCE heard reports that the indelible ink, which was designed to be the “last line of defence” against multiple voting, was

easy to remove in some locations. Hamid Karzai's rivals quickly mounted a call to boycott the election. In practice, this meant that they were asking for the election to be annulled and held all over again.

In the face of mounting — if greatly exaggerated — reports in the international media about “chaos”, Jean Arnault, UNAMA head, called a crisis meeting to decide how to react. The OSCE and the EU offered their advice, which was that calls for annulling the election were unjustifiable and that, instead, the opposition candidates should be offered a credible forum in which their complaints would be investigated. This decision was announced by the JEMB that same afternoon, while the polls were still open. There was no noticeable decline in voter turnout in response to the “boycott” call.

After the polls closed, it became apparent that Hamid Karzai's rivals were considering whether to refuse to recognize the election results and to call on their supporters to take to the streets — a disturbing possibility. It was clear that the ink problem and other irregularities on election day had not resulted from efforts at political manipulation, nor was it likely that they could have had a significant impact on the outcome.

Although the mandate of the Election Support Team did not foresee a pronouncement on whether the elections measured up to international standards, I was encouraged by the OSCE Secretary General and the Chairman-in-Office to play an active role in situations like this. At 11 a.m., on 10 October, I appeared at the Kabul Media Centre to issue a statement describing the call to nullify the election as completely unjustified and urging the candidates to make use of the “thorough and transparent” investigation process offered by the JEMB and UNAMA.

In my statement and at the press conference that followed, I stressed that, “9 October was an historic day in Afghanistan, and the millions who came to the polls clearly wanted to turn from the rule of the gun to the rule of law. If their aspirations are to be met, disputes about the validity of election results should be dealt with as the law provides”.

The OSCE statement was followed by a similar one on 11 October by the EU special representative, Francesc Vendrell. But because the OSCE statement came at the beginning of the news cycle on 10 October, at a time when the success of the election appeared to be hanging in the balance, it dominated the news inside and outside

Afghanistan and affected the actions of Hamid Karzai's rivals.

As the statement said, the OSCE was not validating the election results (obviously, the vote count had not yet begun) nor passing judgment on the merits of the complaints. Certainly there were irregularities, including but not limited to the issue of indelible ink. These should be investigated, and conclusions should be based on the facts as determined by the investigators.

On 11 October, the Election Support Team and others began consulting with the 14 candidates and their representatives who had called for the annulment of the election. It quickly became apparent to most of them that the ink issue alone did not provide a basis for their demands that the election be annulled.

The candidates' attention shifted to other issues, such as voter access to the polls, bias and intimidation of voters, ballot-box stuffing, multiple voting, under-aged voting and issues related to the count and the security of ballot boxes after the polls closed. Most of the leading candidates indicated their willingness to participate in the investigation proposed by the JEMB.

The OSCE Election Support Team and the EU joined UNAMA and the JEMB in discussions on how to organize an investigation that would be acceptable to all candidates. On 11 October, the JEMB appointed an impartial panel of election experts recommended by UNAMA to investigate complaints relating to election day and to draw up recommendations on ways of resolving those complaints.

The panel, consisting of Craig Jenness (Canada), Staffan Darnolf (Sweden) and David Mathieson (UK), undertook a thorough and transparent review of all the complaints within its mandate, and submitted a report and recommendations to the JEMB on 31 October. The central conclusion



Ambassador Barry briefs the press at the UN premises in Kabul.
Photo: Alexander Nitzsche



Ballot boxes are collected, packed and dispatched to counting centres.
Photos: Brian Steers, Jared Hays

of the report was:

“This was a commendable election, particularly given the very challenging circumstances. There were shortcomings, many of which were raised by the candidates themselves. These problems deserved to be considered, to ensure the will of the voters was properly reflected, and to help shape improvements for future elections. But they could not have materially affected the overall result.”

This finding was fully consistent with the preliminary views of the OSCE Election Support Team.

On 3 November, after considering the report of the impartial panel, the JEMB certified Hamid Karzai as the winner of the election with a little over 55 per cent of the vote. Four other candidates, all tied to minority ethnic groups and to irregular militias, garnered more than 10 per cent each.

In the wake of the JEMB certification, most of the candidates grudgingly accepted the verdict of the independent panel of experts, while still insisting that the JEMB was not an impartial body. Due to the investigative process, the announcement of the results was delayed for a few days, but the threat that substantial elements of the population would not accept the legitimacy of the elections was averted. The OSCE Election Support Team and the EU played an important role in achieving this end.

In my experience as the head of previous OSCE/ODIHR election observation missions, the host government and the election

authority are usually not sorry to see us leave. Although they may appreciate the cooperation of ODIHR experts between election cycles, the conclusions and recommendations normally provided at the mission's conclusion are less welcome, especially since they sometimes validate complaints made by the opposition.

In contrast, farewell calls made by the Election Support Team on 18 October were uniformly positive. Our comment that parliamentary elections could be held in spring if decisions were made promptly was particularly welcome, not necessarily because it was thought the new government would choose to begin its term by deciding on difficult issues, but because the recommendations highlighted what exactly had to be done. The invitation to the OSCE to continue to contribute to the process of democracy-building and elections was universal and heartfelt.

I have been involved with the OSCE in one capacity or another since the Stockholm Conference of 1984-1985. In my opinion, never has the Organization so vividly displayed its flexibility, innovativeness and ability to respond effectively to new challenges as in Afghanistan.

“ACTIVIST” APPROACH

The contribution that the OSCE was able to make to Afghanistan's first presidential election was not exactly what Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah or the United Nations Assistance Mission had in mind when an invitation to “observe” was extended to the Organization on 6 July 2004.

A traditional OSCE/ODIHR observation mission involves several weeks of work by a few long-term observers, followed by enough short-term observers to cover a statistically significant number of polling places on election day. More important, it is an arm's-length relationship, in which observers must avoid any involvement in the process, beyond concluding whether or not international standards have been met.

An initial assessment visit to the country, from 11 to 14 July, led to the decision that “observation” in the usual sense of the word was not practical, for security and logistical reasons. In addition, as Afghanistan was not an OSCE participating State, it could not be held to the election standards as set forth in the OSCE Copenhagen Document of 1990.

The OSCE Permanent Council's Decision No. 622 of 29 July 2004 assigned the Election Support Team the task

of analysing the electoral process in Afghanistan and recommending suitable electoral and legislative improvements in advance of parliamentary, provincial and local elections in 2005. The Team was asked to pay particular attention to voter registration, the performance of electoral commissions, vote count and tabulation, as well as the complaint and appeals process.

For this purpose, the Permanent Council approved a team of up to 50 election experts for a period of up to 45 days.

Also invited to observe, the European Union, too, decided independently to field a Democracy and Election Support Mission of a similar size. Neither the OSCE nor the EU mission, or teams fielded by Russia, Japan and various international NGOs, could make any pretence of providing a large-scale presence on election day. At the same time, however, the more flexible mandates of the OSCE and the EU, coupled with invitations from the Afghan authorities and the UN to provide advice during the election process, gave both organizations a more active role to play than would have been the case with normal "observation".

Prior to the arrival of the Election Support Team's advance party on 15 September, there was a second assessment mission and a visit by OSCE Secretary General Ján Kubiš and the Director of his Office, Didier Fau. The aim was to nail down security arrangements and reach the necessary agreements with international military commands and the election authorities.

A key decision was to contract a private security company with an extensive presence in Afghanistan, Global Risk Strategies (GRS), to handle logistics and security matters. A GRS representative was to be with every team deployed at all times to advise on security issues, arrange for transport and interpreters and provide secure lodging.

A second key decision was to formally vest the Head of Mission with full responsibility for decisions on deployment of OSCE personnel in the field. The Secretary General and the OSCE Chairman-in-Office made it imperative that safety and security were to be the main considerations in carrying out the mission.

To ensure that the best possible advice was available to the Head of Mission, the OSCE's Senior Security Co-ordinator, Declan Greenway, was assigned as Deputy Head of Mission for Security. Graham Elson, an experienced election administrator and observer from the United Kingdom, was Deputy Head of Mission for Elections.



Members of the OSCE Election Support Team get their communications and security gear ready.

Photos: Viktor Kryshevich, Brian Steers



TEAM DEPLOYMENT

In preparation for a core team deployment on 26 September, an advance party headed by Project Manager Mark Etherington and Operations Co-ordinator Philip Hatton arrived in Kabul on 15 September. Immediately after heading the election mission to observe Kazakhstan's parliamentary elections of 19 September, I rushed to Vienna for consultations on 22 September.

The UNAMA and most OSCE participating States advocated an activist approach to the mission, with a contingent as close as possible to the 50 authorized by the Permanent Council. Despite the short notice and the hazards inherent in the mission, participating States responded by seconding several dozen volunteers, most of whom had extensive experience in election administration and monitoring, often in dangerous environments. Almost half of the volunteers were women.

A core team of 14 was joined by 28 secondees, who arrived in Kabul on 29 September. Our immediate challenge on arrival was to ensure adequate security, develop a mission concept, decide on a deployment plan, and brief and deploy the teams of experts.

It had been clear from the first assessment visit that the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul could be made secure only if adequate perimeter security were provided by the Afghan National Army and the Ministry of the Interior. Despite frequent assurances, as of 27 September, perimeter security was still inadequate. We explained to the



Shqipe Habibi from Kosovo, part of the UN election team, supervises the counting and registration of ballot boxes. A few days after this photo was taken, she and two colleagues were kidnapped by a militant Afghan group and released four weeks later.
Photo: Olivier d'Auzon

Afghan authorities that unless steps were taken to resolve the problem, the OSCE teams' scheduled arrival on 29 September would be cancelled.

On 28 September, a strong security force arrived on the scene, headed by an Afghan general who remained responsive to OSCE requests.

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS: THE WAY AHEAD

As a latecomer to the scene, the OSCE Election Support Team saw its niche in a close review of improvements in process and legislation required before the parliamentary elections, notionally scheduled for April-May of 2005. Most observers agreed that these elections would be more contentious and more difficult to stage than the presidential elections, and most election experts felt that it would be impossible to meet the spring timeline.

The Support Team set out to examine these assumptions through meetings around the country with political actors, election administrators, international military forces and others. On 18 October, the Team presented its recommendations to Foreign Minister Abdullah, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General Jean Arnault, and the Joint Electoral Management Body and its secretariat.

The Support Team commended the conduct of the elections, while observing that shortcomings had been organizational in nature rather than being matters of pre-meditated dishonesty. However, it stressed that political will would have to be dem-

onstrated by President Karzai and his new Government if the necessary practical steps were to be taken that would permit holding parliamentary, and possibly local, elections in the spring of 2005.

As our report says, "inaction will make postponement of parliamentary elections inevitable". The "road map" accompanying the report points to basic decisions concerning the method of election, the election administration's structure, and a new, improved plan for voter education that must be made 180 days in advance of election day — in other words, *immediately*.

Along with other international election experts, the OSCE Election Support Team believed that the system planned for parliamentary elections — the single non-transferable vote system — was neither practical nor appropriate. The Team recommended a hybrid system in which a portion of the legislature would be elected from party lists for a single nation-wide constituency, while the remainder would be elected from multi-member constituencies. Similar systems exist in many other transitional societies.

Because the parliamentary elections will affect the power base of ethnic leaders and warlords, they will inevitably be more hotly contested than the presidential elections. Consequently, there must be increased emphasis on achieving disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and on enhancing the capabilities of the police and the Afghan National Army.

As the Election Support Team's report emphasizes, before parliamentary elections are undertaken, there must be a complete overhaul of the JEMB and its secretariat and an expansion of the system of electoral commissions down to the provincial level. The system for dealing with complaints and appeals must also be fundamentally strengthened. The OSCE *can* and *should* play a role in these capacity-building efforts.

In most cases, the Team's recommendations complement and reinforce those of the EU support mission and the impartial panel established by UNAMA. There is every reason for the UN, the EU and the OSCE to work together on these issues in the future.

Ambassador Robert L. Barry was Head of the OSCE Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina from January 1998 to June 2001. Prior to his role in Afghanistan, he either led or participated in OSCE/ODIHR observation missions to Serbia and Montenegro, Armenia, Albania, the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan. He was also part of the Carter Centre's delegation that observed the presidential elections in Indonesia in July. He has had a long career with the U.S. Government, including as Ambassador to the Stockholm Conference on Disarmament in Europe and as co-ordinator of U.S. assistance programmes for Eastern and Central Europe and the former Soviet Union. He also served as Ambassador to Bulgaria and Indonesia, as well as Deputy Director of the Voice of America.



AFGHANISTAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2004

Kabul revisited

More than just the “ink issue”

BY ALEXANDER NITZSCHE

Ever since my first visit to Kabul, lasting barely 24 hours, I had always been on the lookout for an ideal opportunity to go back for a longer stay. A little more than a year ago, I was part of a delegation that travelled through several Central Asian countries with Dutch Foreign Minister Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office in 2003 and now NATO Secretary General. On a side trip to Afghanistan, the Minister met President Hamid Karzai and dropped in on the Dutch troops at “Camp Warehouse” outside Kabul.

Two things stand out vividly from my introduction to Kabul: the gut-wrenching nose-dive performed by the German Transall transport plane, simultaneously releasing a series of anti-missile flares with a deafening bang, and the dusty brown-yellow colour enveloping the landscape in the wake of another sandstorm.

My next flight to Kabul, on 28 September 2004, in a civilian United Nations Humanitarian Air Service plane, was far less spectacular, including the simple sandwiches that were handed out. But Kabul’s dust was still there, and so was the overwhelming

feeling of nervousness and curiosity I had felt more than a year earlier.

This time, I came with a 42-member OSCE team that had been sent by the Organization’s participating States to assist Afghanistan in its first-ever presidential election and to put together recommendations for the parliamentary polls scheduled in spring 2005.

We all had taken part in several election observation missions. Some of us were armed with special credentials, earned from previous lengthy assignments in the region. Several spoke Dari or Pashtu, or both — the languages spoken by the majority of Afghans.

My task was to take care of the information needs of journalists, which I knew was going to be demanding, considering the keen interest of the international media in the Afghan polls. They were the main event on the global news agenda, it seemed to me, immediately before the U.S. elections.

I also came with another brief. In September 2003, my wife, Georgina, had spent two weeks in Kabul for an Austrian NGO to set up a grassroots initiative to convey to Afghan women an understanding of democratic principles, especially the concept behind elections. My suitcase was crammed with training manuals and audio cassettes for distribution to local NGOs. The project was modest, but feedback from the training seminars was heartening: The women of Afghanistan were raring to vote.

The security situation was a matter of serious concern to us all. We had been asked to keep our heads down, and our freedom of movement was highly restricted. We were ordered not to venture out alone in the city and after dark. The car-bomb suicide attack against a U.S.-run security company in Kabul was much discussed over dinner at the Hotel Intercontinental, where we were staying.

The first few days were spent in briefings, briefings, and, to wrap up the day, some more briefings. On the third day, flak jackets, helmets and communications gear were handed out. Reports by the field teams from the regional centres via the satellite equipment were to be received at the “base camp”, a room on the hotel’s fourth floor. Finally, we thought, here was something to set our practical work in motion.

We were just in the middle of heaving the 15-kg jackets over our shoulders and figuring out how to work the satellite phones when I started receiving the first calls from journalists. As expected, every major inter-

Women outside a polling station in Jalalabad proudly show off their registration cards.
Photo: Stephanie Bleeker



Voters' ink is applied at a polling centre for women in Jalalabad. Photo: Stephanie Bleeker

national media outlet, from the U.S. broadcaster, ABC, to the German weekly, *Die Zeit*, had sent a team to Afghanistan. All seemed to have arrived on the same flight, descending en masse on the "Intercon".

Initially, the mission managed to keep a low profile, but not surprisingly, media interest in the role of the Election Support Team grew. There seemed no end to inquiries, so we thought it wiser to hold a press conference to spell out our mandate rather than attempting to respond individually to every

request for an interview.

This decision turned out to be a smart one: Because of the dearth of real news stories prior to election day — there was hardly any campaigning going on — some reporters tried sniffing around for issues where there weren't any. For a very short while, the press conference, in which we explained the merits of a small mission, filled the news vacuum.

On election day, I woke up to the muezzin's call for the first prayers of the day. Gradually, the city turned on its lights, dispelling the darkness. The streets were strewn with red-brown piles of sand and dust, remnants of a desert storm, and the air was veiled with a thick fog. I wondered what the coming hours would bring. Would the prediction of our security specialists — that the voting would be marred by violence and clashes — come true?

As it turned out, 9 October 2004 was probably one of the quietest days in Afghanistan's recent history. Kabul's streets, normally clogged with traffic, were almost deserted.

While the capital was nearly incident-free, however, the same could not be said for the rest of the country. Security reports described shootings and explosions. In a

Afghanistan's women: No looking back

Television footage showing massive throngs of Afghan female voters at polling centres, queuing patiently or beside themselves with excitement, flashed around the world.

More than 40 per cent of all the registered voters were women, and as likely as not, most of them exercised their right to be heard.

What did Afghan women have to gain from the election?

In fact, only one of the 18 presidential candidates was a woman — Dr. Massouda Jalal, a paediatrician and ethnic Tajik, who ran on an independent ticket.

Early exit polls suggested that she had received only 8 per cent of the female vote; many women were sceptical

about her "independent" status and felt that her husband exerted considerable behind-the-scenes influence over her. Final results showed that she ranked sixth, receiving 1.1 per cent of the vote.

Although some of the male presidential candidates did name a woman as one of their two vice-presidential running mates, none advocated a particularly strong gender-related agenda, which would anyway have been difficult to implement in Afghanistan's tradition-bound society.

For decades, despite the fact that they comprised some 60 per cent of society, Afghan women were not allowed to make the most ordinary decisions affecting their own lives. The 2001 Bonn Agreement opened up a whole new world

for them. Today, women can go outside the home on their own, earn a living, and attend school and university. Their first-time presence at the Olympic Games in Athens in August was a breakthrough that was much-heralded around the world.

The parliamentary elections in 2005 will usher in even more progress: The electoral law guarantees women a 25 per cent minimum political representation in parliament.

No matter how dramatic these changes are, however, Afghanistan's women still need to struggle to be able to take giant strides to catch up with their sisters in many other Muslim societies. Fortunately, the concepts of freedom of choice and gender equality are not a novelty for Afghanistan,

especially for its educated urban population. They have been there before.

This time around, however, the stakes are higher. There is no turning back, no leaving Afghanistan in the hands of warlords ever again.

Afghan women, with the help of the international community, simply have no choice but to take their destiny into their own hands—not merely through the ballot but by becoming deeply and politically involved in the rebuilding of their war-torn country and in its evolving institutions.

Massouda Jalal may have emerged disappointed at her performance in the presidential election, but she can be proud to have blazed the trail.

Alexander Nitzsche

close call, a truck filled with gasoline and a remote-controlled bomb was intercepted by police in Kandahar. Even so, it was a far cry from what had been widely forecast.

A common theory was that even the Afghan militants were amazed at the level of enthusiasm with which people had gone to cast their ballots. Everywhere, long, winding queues led to polling centres. Many citizens trudged through inclement weather, sometimes for hours, only to find that they had to wait several more hours to move to the head of the queue.

In the meantime, it emerged that, all over the country, many Afghan polling staff were encountering problems with the indelible ink that was meant to mark a voter's finger to avoid multiple voting, a practice used in a number of new democracies, with much success. It appeared that the ink had turned out to be less indelible than it should have been.

Before we knew it, some presidential candidates started talking about voter fraud and annulment of election results. Despite the absence of violence and a massive voter turnout, the international media, ever hungry for a fresh spin on the news, were competing to file stories on the "chaos" and "turmoil" in Afghanistan's first-ever presidential election.

The day after the elections, reports of angry demonstrators filtered in from certain parts of the country. Having gotten wind of the possibility of a boycott of the election and the annulment of election results, crowds were making known their displeasure at the candidates and the overall election process.

At this juncture, the OSCE team felt that the mission could no longer remain silent. In Kabul's newly-refurbished Amani High School, which served as the temporary international media centre, Ambassador Robert Barry, the head of the Election Support Team, read out a statement supporting Afghanistan's Joint Electoral Management Body in its view: The candidates' demand that the election should be nullified was unjustified.

His statement proved to be a turning point.

Many will remember little else about this election than the "ink issue". But one image will stay with me forever: the transformation of the Afghan landscape into an intense blue sea of *burqas*, as thousands of fearless women flocked to polling stations, pushing and shoving and elbowing their way to the ballot box.

Alexander Nitzsche, a Press and Public Information Officer in the OSCE Secretariat, served as spokesperson for the Election Support Team in Afghanistan.



Election Support Team in Afghanistan "reflects positively on all of us"

Several OSCE delegations commented on the unique nature of the election assistance provided to Afghanistan and commended the exemplary co-operation between the OSCE Secretariat, the ODIHR, the Afghan Government and the international community. The delegations were responding to Ambassador Robert Barry's report on the work of the OSCE Election Support Team in Afghanistan. The following are excerpts from some of the remarks made at a meeting of the Permanent Council on 21 October.

"Despite the challenging security situation in Afghanistan, [the Team] fulfilled their tasks in good faith, with determination and, what is most important, with no casualties. The Chairmanship would also like to thank participating States that have supported the operation with personnel and funds. The first OSCE mission for election support in a partner country at a decisive stage in its development has proved to be a success..."

"The OSCE has brought to bear hidden resources and has demonstrated its poten-

tial for rendering support to democratic processes outside of its own geographic area. Its experience as a new type of OSCE instrument for election support and assistance to a partner country is an important asset for the Organization." **Bulgarian Chairmanship**

"We see great value in drawing lessons from this experience, particularly with a view to planning for the upcoming parliamentary elections." **Delegation of Canada**

"The European Union is pleased with the close co-operation between the OSCE Election Support Team and the European Union missions on the ground, in line with the excellent co-operative relationship between the EU and the OSCE generally." **Netherlands Presidency of the European Union**

"Some of my colleagues may remember that my delegation was insistent on calling this a 'team' rather than a 'mission'. And I am glad to say that together with the word 'team', the notion of 'support' took hold, since we did not consider it a classic mission. However, the only danger

here is that, while the notion of assistance is a very legitimate alternative to simple monitoring, we must be also careful that, together with assistance, we do not indirectly give ourselves the right to play a validating role ... So, before we think about duplicating this model, I think we need to reflect a little bit on where the mandate crosses the line between monitoring, assistance and validation." **Delegation of Armenia**

"The OSCE's decision to send an Election Support Team to Afghanistan embodies the very best of what the Organization is all about. It makes us proud for the OSCE to be an important participant on the international scene. The historic election in Afghanistan was, in the truest sense of the term, a confidence- and security-building measure, and our Organization responded to a direct request from the Afghan Government to lend support to this effort. The successful completion of the Afghan Election Support Team's mission is a real achievement for the OSCE and one that reflects positively on all of us." **Delegation of the United States**



U.S. ELECTION 2004

Americans try to make sense of the OSCE

An established democracy largely lives up to its electoral commitments

A polling station in Fairfax County, Virginia
Photo: ODIHR/
Michaela Kuefner

BY URDUR GUNNARSDOTTIR

Washington, D.C., 2 November 2004, 1.15 p.m. — The red light is on. Kojo Nnamdi's daily two-hour radio show on WAMU 88.5 FM is on the air when I sneak into the studio on the American University campus, after having been caught in the U.S. capital's noon-day traffic snarl.

Kojo, an immigrant from Guyana who has been rated by the *Washington Post* as "maybe the best interviewer in town", keeps his cool about the delay. His other guest is trying to convince radio listeners that the OSCE's observation of the U.S. election is a "threat to U.S. sovereignty", and that "transparency does not necessarily work both ways".

The landmark Copenhagen Document of 1990, which obligates participating States

in the Organization to observe each other's electoral processes, is central to any explanation of the OSCE's role. Most people who call into the show seem to appreciate this background, but my fellow guest remains sceptical.

The Kojo Nnamdi Show was just one of many opportunities to answer three basic questions we were being asked over and over again in connection with our presence at the presidential and congressional election in the United States: Why are you here? What will you do? And who are you anyway?

Contrary to popular misconception, it was not exactly the first time that the OSCE's Warsaw-based Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) was assessing the election process in the United States. During the mid-term polls in 2002, a team of ten election experts reviewed some of the reforms that had been implemented in Florida following the presidential election in 2000.

Since that mission, the United States has pursued further reforms under the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002, which introduced federal legislation to regulate specific aspects of the national election process.

When one of the oldest and largest democracies in the world undertakes significant reforms in its electoral system, the rest of the world is bound to be interested, and not least of all the ODIHR, which has observed close to 150 elections in the past decade. Furthermore, the HAVA addresses a wide range of polling issues that many of the OSCE's participating States are either also tackling or have gained some expertise in.

Led by university professor Rita Süßmuth, a former president of the German Bundestag, an OSCE/ODHIR team went to the United States in early October to take a detailed look at the implementation of the HAVA. They also followed up other issues that had already been identified by our election experts during a visit to the United States in September.

On 4 November, the OSCE/ODIHR announced its preliminary conclusions regarding the conduct of the elections at a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. As is customary, this was done in co-operation with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

In keeping with usual practice, the OSCE/ODIHR experts focused on the legal and administrative aspects of the election

as well as on the political context. They pored over legislation and policy documents and met with election authorities, political parties and NGOs — and even with manufacturers of voting equipment.

In some states, legislation does not allow for observers; in others, polling stations are classified as public places. The U.S. Election Assistance Commission and the State Department were of tremendous help in enabling us to cope with the daunting task of having our observers accredited — daunting, since it had to be done in each individual state and sometimes in individual counties, by officials who had never even heard of that mysterious organization called the OSCE.

The 70 short-term observers, many of whom were parliamentarians from participating States, were deployed to California, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia and Washington, D.C.

Suddenly, they found themselves among the most sought after people in the country. CNN, CBS, NBC and the BBC were lining up for interviews. Japanese television crews appeared at every turn. The European media called day and night, desperate to get hold of their nationals in the observer group. Local U.S. newspapers wanted to know if their state had been selected for observation, while the larger U.S. dailies struggled to get a grip on what on earth this strange OSCE creature was all about.

The highly decentralized nature of the U.S. election system was not the only factor that posed a challenge to the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission. The event took place during the most demanding election season we had ever experienced. Within less than two months — from mid-September to early November — we observed six elections (see box, page 19), which involved deploying some 1,700 election observers representing a cross-section of OSCE participating States. Election experts were in great demand and were constantly criss-crossing the OSCE region.

We were often asked to comment on the value of the OSCE's observation in the U.S. elections. Professor Süssmuth was asked this question at the post-election press conference. She replied:

“This was an excellent opportunity to exchange democratic practices and know-how, and to get an insight into the spirit of the U.S. approach to the conduct of elections. The U.S. system is different from oth-



Professor Rita Süssmuth talks to a television crew outside a polling station on 2 November. Photo: ODIHR/Michaela Kuefner

ers that we have seen before. However, the fact that election systems are different from country to country does not mean that one is preferred over another. All are based on the same values: respect for human rights, respect for the rule of law, respect for the popular vote. What is important is that the system is transparent and accountable, and that voters have placed their trust in it.”

The mission concluded that the elections had been conducted in an environment reflecting a long-standing democratic tradition, comprising institutions governed by the rule of law, free and professional media and an active civil society involved in all aspects of the election process. The mission also emphasized that the Help America Vote Act could be viewed as a process rather than as a final legislative step, designed to address some of the remaining issues that had generated the issue of electoral reform in the United States.

Overall, although the media and some others seemed content with the mission's findings, some made known their disappointment with the lack of outright criticism of the process.

“Well I guess it *is* good news,” said a television producer with a sigh, “which means no news.”

But for us on the mission, the *really* good news was that we found a ready-made opportunity to introduce the OSCE and its election observation activities to the U.S. public.

Urdur Gunnarsdottir is spokesperson of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.



OSCE/ODIHR

Election observers/ OSCE ambassadors: Parliamentarians' dual roles come to the fore



Voting in Fairfax, Virginia
Photo: ODIHR/Michaela Kuefner

BY BARBARA HAERING

The U.S. presidential election of 2004 provided the OSCE with its first opportunity to send a comprehensive Election Observation Mission to the United States. I was honoured that the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA), Alcee L. Hastings, chose me to lead the Short-Term Election Observation Mission and asked the Chairman-in-Office to appoint me as his Special Co-ordinator. Upon the request of PA President Hastings, the Chairman-in-Office also appointed Italian parliamentarian Giovanni Kessler as my Deputy. This unprecedented support for the PA was important to our work.

Since the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) was unable to provide its usual logistical support due to the lack of long-term observers in the field, the Parliamentary Assembly's International Secretariat assumed responsibility not only for conducting the extensive briefings in Washington, D.C., but also for deploying the parliamentarians and organizing their programmes.

The briefings, held on Capitol Hill on 28 and 29 October, included presentations by the U.S. Federal Election Commission, the Election Assistance Commission, the International Foundation for Election Systems, and the Republican and Democratic election campaigns.

The complexity of the United States' highly decentralized election procedures was new to most of the parliamentarians from Europe. Members of the Election Observation Mission were fully aware that the country was in the midst of a crucial phase of election reform. For the first time, nationwide rules and regulations for election procedures were stipulated under a federal law, the Help America Vote Act. Known as the HAVA, it was approved by the U.S. Congress in 2002 but has not yet been fully implemented.

On 30 October, 52 parliamentarians from 19 OSCE participating States were deployed not only to the key battleground states of Florida, New Mexico, Ohio and Minnesota, but also to Maryland, North Carolina, Virginia and the District of Columbia. This deployment plan offered a balanced picture of the country's election process. I myself visited ten polling stations in Cleveland, Ohio.

On election day, my parliamentary colleagues found themselves having to

improvise on the spot since OSCE observers were not automatically granted access to every polling station they went to. This was because some state laws did not include international observers under the categories of persons permitted to enter polling places, or because the state law's lack of reference to international observers was deemed to be an obstacle to their presence. These hitches could not be resolved by the fact that the OSCE had been invited by the U.S. State Department to observe the elections. Fortunately, experienced parliamentarians are used to tackling delicate predicaments and I believe that, in the end, we did achieve the requirements for effective election observation.

On 4 November, together with Rita Süßmuth, Head of the Long-Term Election Observation Mission, I presented our preliminary post-election statement at the National Press Club. Our key message was that the U.S. elections had by and large fulfilled the commitments that the OSCE's 55 participating States had signed up to in the Copenhagen Document of 1990. However, I added, Congress and individual states should consider introducing legal provisions allowing officially invited international observers to have unimpeded access to all stages of the election process.

I stressed that U.S. election reforms would have to continue and even go beyond the HAVA, especially concerning international observers. Nationwide voter registration rules and national standards for voting roll purges would be needed. Clearer rules for handling provisional ballots and identification, and for military and overseas voting, would have to be drawn up.

Moreover, I drew attention to the fact that the Election Observation Mission had enhanced the cred-

ibility, not only of the OSCE, but also that of the United States as a participating State of the OSCE. It is important for the Organization not to be perceived as applying double standards in the observation and monitoring of elections in the OSCE area.

Throughout the mission's duration, my colleagues and I were literally chased by representatives of the media in the United States as well as from our own countries. Over and over again, we had to explain that the U.S. Government had invited the OSCE to observe the elections, pointing to the commitments laid down in the Copenhagen Document and describing the work of the OSCE and its institutions. Thus, we were performing the role of election observers as well as ambassadors of the OSCE.

On a personal note, I must say that I was impressed by the passion exhibited during the presidential campaign, by the commitment of campaign volunteers up to the very last minute, and by the patience and resolve of voters on election day. I came away from the mission with a wealth of lessons that will be important to my work as a parliamentarian in Switzerland.

Barbara Haering was elected Vice-President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in 2001. A citizen of both Canada and Switzerland, she has been a member of the Swiss parliament since 1990, where she is Vice-President of the Defence Committee.



Parliamentarians Barbara Haering and Giovanni Kessler

ODIHR election observation in 2004: 12 missions, 3,500 observers

Georgia: presidential election, 4 January

450 short-term observers for election day
38 long-term observers and core staff

Russian Federation: presidential election, 14 March

340 short-term observers for election day
51 long-term observers and core staff

Georgia: repeat parliamentary elections, 28 March

440 short-term observers for election day
40 long-term observers and core staff

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: early presidential election, 14/28 April 2004

200 short-term observers for election day
28 long-term observers and core staff

Serbia (Serbia and Montenegro): presidential election, 13 June

No short-term observers for election day
19 long-term observers and core staff

Kazakhstan: parliamentary elections, 19 September

300 short-term observers for election day
31 long-term observers and core staff

Bosnia and Herzegovina: municipal elections, 2 October

200 short-term observers for election day
21 long-term observers and core staff

Belarus: parliamentary elections, 17 October

300 short-term observers for election day
29 long-term observers and core staff

Ukraine: presidential election, 31 October/ 21 November/26 December

600-1,000 short-term observers for election day
57-80 long-term observers and core staff

U.S. presidential and congressional elections: 2 November

80 short-term observers for election day
10 core staff

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Referendum, 7 November

200 short-term observers for polling day
22 long-term observers and core staff

Uzbekistan: parliamentary elections, 26 December

No short-term observers for election day
20 long-term observers and core staff



HIGH COMMISSIONER ON NATIONAL MINORITIES

The education solution

Fostering harmony in diversity

I was delighted by the decision of the 2004 Bulgarian Chairmanship to assign priority to education on the OSCE agenda. As “an instrument of conflict prevention at the earliest possible stage”, my job is to tackle the underlying causes of tension between minorities and majorities. Perhaps the most effective means of achieving this is by investing in educational policies and practices designed to meet the special needs and concerns of both.

BY ROLF EKÉUS

The problems that can arise in inter-ethnic relations vary from case to case. However, I have found that education-related issues crop up again and again. This is also why the previous High Commissioner on National Minorities decided to develop practical and coherent guidelines that would help legislators, policy-makers, representatives of minority groups and NGO leaders to initiate and implement suitable educational policies in line with international standards.

This decision led a group of reputable independent experts under the auspices of the then High Commissioner, Max van der Stoep, to draw up the 1996 Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities.

The Recommendations offer education stakeholders a set of measures and principles designed to strengthen inter-ethnic harmony and social cohesion. Good practices in minority education at different school levels, including curriculum development, are explained simply and succinctly.

LANGUAGE

The language issue has been at the forefront of political debate in a number of OSCE participating States and is at the heart of most of the ethnic-related situations I am engaged in. This is hardly surprising. Language often defines a national minority and underpins the right of its members to maintain and develop their own identity.

The Hague Recommendations point out that this right can be pursued more readily if members of minorities acquire a proper

An integrated school in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
Photos on pages 20, 21, 22 and 23:
OSCE/Vladimir Kiriushin

knowledge of their mother tongue during the educational process, starting in early childhood. At the same time, they have a responsibility to become integrated into the fabric of national life, for example, by learning the State language.

A typical destabilizing situation may arise when authorities seek to spread the use of the State language as a tool to enhance nationhood and when a powerful minority, compelled to accept the linguistic dominance of the majority, perceives it as an attempt to downgrade the group's language.

Badly thought-out reforms in language education can have a negative domino effect on ethnic communities, and, as a result, on the country as a whole. If students from a national minority are unable to gain admission to institutions of higher learning, the group's pool of qualified labour shrinks and its ability to compete in the labour market is reduced.

Time and time again, analysts warn that joblessness and aimlessness among the young in marginalized societies create a fertile ground for hatred, intolerance and radical ideologies. And the lack of qualified



people reduces the group's opportunities to take part in the State's political, as well as economic, life.

One very practical and effective way to ensure that the needed linguistic skills of minorities are properly honed is through multilingual education — teaching part of the curriculum in a second or third language.

"The South East European University has met, indeed exceeded, its stated aims of contributing significantly to the solution of the problem of higher education in the Albanian language, providing a carefully chosen range of teaching programmes in a broad international and European perspective and ensuring a multicultural approach to teaching. The University has already shown national and regional leadership in its design of curricula, adoption of small group teaching and active learning modes, and in the rapid creation of an attractive greenfield campus with highly functional teaching spaces appropriate to its preferred modes of teaching and learning."

Report of an OECD review, "Improving access and opportunity: Higher education in transition in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", 2004

South East European University. An internationally acclaimed initiative of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the South East European University (SEE U) in Tetovo, has only just celebrated its third anniversary in late 2004, but it has already made a name for itself as a leader in the development of modern higher education in the Balkans.

The University's high academic standards are not its only drawing power. It is also a showcase for inter-ethnic integration and co-operation. It is committed to Albanian language and culture, but almost 25 per cent of the student population are non-Albanians. It has adopted a European and international orientation, with courses conducted in Albanian, Macedonian and English.

In 2000-2001, High Commissioner van der Stoep was at the forefront of the international effort to raise funds for the multilingual academic institution. Today, it is fully autonomous, with both the first and the current High Commissioners on the University's Board.

In 2005, the first freshmen who were admitted to the University in October 2001 will obtain their bachelor's degrees, thus realizing the concept behind its creation — to address the shortage of Macedonian-Albanian graduates in the country's universities.

The early impact of the SEE University has been impressive: The overall percentage of Albanians in the country's university student population has grown from an estimated 5 per cent to more than 12 per cent, with a current enrolment of more than 5,000 students.



Transition Year Programme. The High Commissioner on National Minorities introduced the Transition Year Programme in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (fYROM) in 1997 with the support of the Government of the Netherlands.

The Programme's aim is to boost ethnic Albanians' chances of admission into the state universities in Skopje and Bitola. Saturday classes in the Macedonian language, which are conducted by teams of Albanian and Macedonian instructors, have been growing in popularity. In the spring of 2003, more than 80 per cent of the 1,200 students who enrolled in the lessons passed the university entrance examinations.

A group of project participants also produced a handbook for teaching Macedonian to non-Macedonian speakers.

"The Transition Year Programme provides the ethnic Albanian community with a fantastic opportunity to enjoy the right to education. The quality of applicants to state universities has improved considerably, especially in mathematics, biology, medicine and the natural sciences. The Programme also brings together Albanian and Macedonian teachers and students in partnership, making its impact felt far beyond the education sector."

Bajram Pollozhani

Project Director, Transition Year Programme



OSCE/LADIMIR KIRUSHIN

"The project on the Working Group is a pioneering initiative in Central Asia. Authorities are working hand in hand with representatives of ethnic groups on education issues. I look forward to the practical implementation of the recommendations in our final report, especially in the context of the ongoing reform of Kyrgyzstan's education standards, curricula and textbooks."

Gaisha Ibragimova, Chairperson of Working Group on Integration through Education in Kyrgyzstan

PARTICIPATION

Policies to meet the needs of national minorities are likely to be more relevant and acceptable if minority members are involved in the decision-making process. Inclusion in decision-making sends an important signal of the majority's openness for dialogue and accommodation of minority interests. Frequently, however, ethnic communities are not adequately represented in public bodies and institutions precisely because of the shortage of educated minority members.

Kyrgyzstan has reason to be proud of its Working Group on Integration through Education as a model of minority involvement in decision-making. Created by President Askar Akaev in 2003 at my recommendation, it reflects the rich tapestry of Kyrgyz society.

Fact-finding trips all across Kyrgyzstan enabled members to talk to local authorities and to representatives of national minority communities,



OSCE/LADIMIR KIRUSHIN

NGOs, teachers and parents. The Working Group gathered and analysed views on promoting tolerance and understanding among ethnic groups through curriculum development, language teaching, teacher training, multilingual education and special teaching aids.

Drawing on international norms and best practices, the Working Group issued a report with ambitious but practical recommendations aimed at fostering social integration and equality. President Akaev has said that the report would "open up a new phase in the ethnic policy of Kyrgyzstan".

TEXTBOOKS AND CURRICULUM

The teaching of languages is a central element in multicultural education, but it is not the be-all and the end-all. I have always insisted on a broader, more comprehensive approach — one that ensures that the curriculum covers the history, culture and traditions of both the national majority *and* the State's main ethnic communities.

Textbooks that ignore diversity or worse, present it as a threat to be feared and eliminated, serve to fuel intolerance, xenophobia and ethnic stereotyping — an explosive recipe for conflict and instability within the State.

Commission on textbooks. In southern Serbia, home to a significant Albanian minority, the High Commissioner and a broad cross-section of partners have established a Commission to develop a primary-school textbook on history. The Commission will oversee the development of the curricula for other second-

and third-grade subjects in Albanian-language primary schools.

The Commission's first official meeting in February 2004 was hailed as a success by project participants: the Serbian Ministry for Education and Sports, the State Union Ministry for Human and Minority Rights in Serbia, and the Albanian community, including history teachers.

At a follow-up meeting in Belgrade in June 2004, the Commission agreed that, in ethnic Albanian primary schools in southern Serbia, 30 per cent of the Serbian history curriculum would be devoted to the history of Albanians, and the rest of the Albanian curriculum would be in line with the Serbian curriculum.



This little girl in southern Serbia will benefit from improved textbooks.
Photo: OSCE Mission in Serbia and Montenegro/
Milan Obradović

"The working meeting between Ministry officials and Albanian teachers marks a historic event; it showed that the Ministry is willing to continue the necessary reforms for the benefit of Albanian schools in Serbia."

Riza Halimi, Mayor of the southern Serbian municipality of Presevo and leader of the Albanian Party for Democratic Action in Serbia

"Since we have not received any training since 1991, we highly appreciate the sessions offered by the OSCE, especially because they follow a completely new approach: practical, participatory, with the pupil at the centre, and complete with excellent teaching aids. Now pupils love coming to our classes!"

Letter from teachers in Moldova to the High Commissioner

IN-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING

During my visits to OSCE participating States, I never fail to stress the need to equip teachers with the latest teaching methodologies and techniques. In fact, both Government authorities and national minority leaders agree that the quality of teaching holds the key to the fulfilment of their aspirations in education.

The High Commissioner on National Minorities promotes interactive, student-centred methods. Teachers are encouraged to think of training as an opportunity for creativity, self-discovery and further learning, which stands in stark contrast to traditional methods.

Teacher-training. Our project in Moldova has been translating this concept into practice. Nearly all 1,200 teachers of Moldovan as a second language in grades 5 to 9 have undergone training in modern teaching methods. Together with our implementing partner, the participants drafted a manual on teaching the State language.



OSCE/VLADIMIR KRUSHIN

“Perhaps the most important conclusion from my activities in conflict prevention is that we should devote more attention to the root causes of ethnic tensions. Conflicts between different groups are often the results of difficulties which, in essence, are not of an inter-ethnic nature. Relatively minor problems can, if not tackled, develop into major sources of tension.”

*Max van der Stoep
OSCE's first High Commissioner on
National Minorities, 1993-2001*



OSCE/ADAMIR KIRUSHIN

LOOKING AHEAD

Just recently, the OSCE Secretariat's Conflict Prevention Centre announced the results of a survey of all the education-related activities that the Organization's field operations, institutions and the Secretariat have implemented in the past five years. I take this as a signal that the OSCE's focus on education as an integral component of long-term security is not merely a passing fancy.

As High Commissioner on National Minorities, I am excited about the possibilities that education holds for the future. I intend to follow developments in this dynamic field closely, including the new ideas and concepts that are figuring in the public debate in many participating States. I will continue to expand and develop the work I am doing in education together with groups, communities and governments for the benefit of inter-ethnic relations throughout the OSCE region.

A little boy in an integrated school in Bishkek sings the national anthem to herald the new academic year.

“The Lund, Oslo and Hague Recommendations that have been drawn up under the auspices of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities are providing our country with guidance in drafting new federal laws that aim to ensure the rights and freedoms of Russia's citizens. I am referring to new laws that serve as the legal basis for promoting and developing the languages, education, art and culture of the peoples of the Russian Federation. National and cultural autonomous bodies dealing with ethnic minorities are also guided by these laws.”

Vladimir Zorin, Russian Minister for Ethnic Policy Co-ordination, 2001-2004



OSCE/HONIM

Rolf Ekéus of Sweden has been serving as the OSCE's High Commissioner on National Minorities since July 2001. He has had a long and distinguished diplomatic career, with foreign postings in Bonn, Nairobi, Washington, D.C., New York and The Hague. He was Sweden's Ambassador to the United States from 1997 to 2000. Ambassador Ekéus was active in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) during the post-Communist transition years, heading the Swedish delegation to the CSCE (1988-1992) and playing a key role in drafting the Charter of Paris for a New Europe (1990). Arms control and disarmament have been recurrent themes in Ambassador Ekéus' career. He is best known for his work as Executive Chairman of the United Nations Special Commission on Iraq (UNSCOM), during which he led the weapons inspectors (1991-1997). He also serves as Chairman of the Governing Board of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.



HIGH COMMISSIONER ON NATIONAL MINORITIES

Integrating ethnic Uzbeks into Kazakhstan's universities

Multilingual education matters

South Kazakhstan is home to a substantial ethnic Uzbek population – some 350,000, according to 1999 estimates, or about 17 per cent of total inhabitants in the *oblast*. Every year, 80 Uzbek-language schools turn out about 6,000 high school graduates who face a challenge in their quest for further learning. In partnership with the South Kazakhstan Regional Department of Education, the local NGO, Dialog, and the Government of Norway, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities may well be on the right track towards an effective solution based on a sound premise: Being multilingual is a valuable asset that can serve as the integrating factor among Kazakhstan's ethnically diverse groups.

BY IGOR SAVIN

Malikhha Sotiboldiyeva is in her final year in an Uzbek-language high school in Sairam, a village in South Kazakhstan. She is a typical 16-year old girl in many ways. Movies, teen-magazines, make-up and music are part and parcel of her daily life. However, when asked about the future, her serious and reflective side takes over.

“My parents taught me to always give a helping hand to people in need,” Malikhha says with passion and conviction. “This value has been deeply ingrained in me and in our community. This is why I have made up my mind to become a doctor. It is the most noble profession in the world. And chemistry and biology are such exciting subjects!”

Before the break-up of the Soviet Union, most students in Malikhha's situation would go on to continue their studies in a uni-

versity or vocational college in nearby Uzbekistan. After all, its capital, Tashkent, is only about 100 kilometres away.



In the past few years, however, South Kazakhstan's Uzbek community has been seeing higher-education opportunities for its young people begin to shrink. For one thing, sending children to universities in Uzbekistan was placing a heavy financial burden on families.

Another complicating factor was that while Uzbekistan adopted the Latin

An Uzbek-language school
in Shymkent,
South Kazakhstan
Photo: OSCE/Igor Savin



Malikha Sotiboldiyeva epitomizes Kazakhstan's multilingual future.
Photo: OSCE/Igor Savin

alphabet in 1994, Uzbek-language schools in Kazakhstan continued using the Cyrillic alphabet in keeping with the country's educational system.

Meanwhile, further studies in Kazakhstan were also becoming inaccessible. Its university entrance examination — and the courses themselves — are conducted in Kazakh and Russian, the country's State and official languages. This would pose difficulties for any newcomer who has spent 11 years studying in an Uzbek monolingual school.

Because of this, Uzbek language and literature was just about the only field of study that ethnic Uzbeks could comfortably specialize in if they wished to pursue higher education in Kazakhstan.

To explore a way out of this dilemma, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities launched a scheme offering special Kazakh and Russian language classes in the village of Sairam, where most of the 35,000 residents are Uzbek. Starting with School No. 19 in July 2003, the project has recently expanded to Malikha's school, also in Sairam.

Every day, Malikha and some 200 future university applicants in the two schools study Kazakh and Russian terminology with self-imposed discipline.

"We have a tough schedule," Malikha says. "We have to stay several extra hours after school five days a week. You should see us concentrating and cramming for the university exam! We know that the only way to obtain high test scores is through diligent studying. I'm thankful that my parents are very supportive and do not overwhelm me with household chores and try to spare me from work in the fields."

Teachers leave no stone unturned in making the classes as lively and as stimulating as possible through language games and participatory exercises. In a joint activity, teachers and students compiled Kazakh-Russian-Uzbek terminology dictionaries in six subjects: biology, geography, history, chemistry, mathematics and physics. These have been made available for the perusal of other Uzbek-language schools in Kazakhstan on the Internet, at www.natminedukz.org.

"We have started using the dictionaries and hope that every student in every Uzbek-language school in Kazakhstan has access to them through the Internet, which is truly a fantastic means of communica-

tion," says Bakhadyr Nuraliyev, Headmaster of School No. 1, where Malikha is a senior. "We're eager to co-operate with other schools, both in our native Kazakhstan and in other countries of the region."

Funded by Norway, the project has enriched the two schools' library resources with hundreds of books and manuals in Kazakh and Russian. Computer rooms have been refurbished and equipment upgraded to encourage students to use the online dictionaries. The salaries of some 30 teachers and support staff are also drawn from project funds. Teachers will soon be trained in modern language-teaching methods, including interactive techniques. The dictionaries will be expanded to cover more subjects, and efforts to promote their online use will be stepped up.

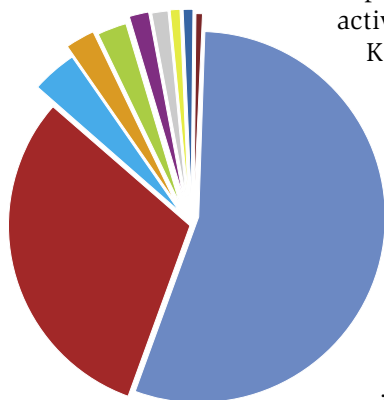
The results that are emerging look sufficiently promising for the pilot project to serve as a model for other Uzbek-language schools in Kazakhstan, which have a total enrolment of some 80,000 students. What is needed now is to extend the solution to as many of them as possible.

In 2004, every one of the 35 high school graduates who took advantage of the extra classes was admitted to one of Kazakhstan's universities. Biology, medicine, chemistry, mathematics, geology, international trade and customs law, and fire-fighting are just some of the major fields of study that are popular among members of the high school class of 2004.

"I hope that Malikha and her class will be as lucky when it is their turn to take the exams in July 2005," says Headmaster Nuraliyev. "Junior students need to see that the future is unfolding positively for the new graduates; it will give them the confidence to continue their efforts to master Kazakh and Russian. We are very proud of our mother tongue. At the same time, today's realities call for multilingualism. I'm very pleased that we have made a start in meeting this modern-day demand."

Igor Savin is Director of Dialog, the NGO responsible for implementing the multilingual teaching project in Sairam. Dialog monitors inter-ethnic relations, promotes education for tolerance and conducts training in human rights in South Kazakhstan.

Kazakhs	7.9 million
Russians	4.5 million
Ukrainians	547,000
Uzbeks	371,000
Germans	353,400
Tatars	249,000
Uighurs	210,000
Belarusians	111,900
Koreans	99,700
Azeri	78,300



KAZAKHSTAN'S MAIN ETHNIC GROUPS

Total national population: 14.9 million

Source: statistics Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 1999 Census

“A mountain bike rather than a Ferrari”

An Italian swan song

Ambassador Lenzi visiting Petra, Jordan’s “rose-red city in the rock”, after a Mediterranean Seminar in Aqaba in October 2003



OSCE/ALEXANDER NITZSCHE

BY GUIDO LENZI

I will start with a passage from an article in the *Economist*: “A Swede, a Bulgarian and an Irishman meet in a mountain village guarded by Georgians wearing American uniforms. What sounds like the start of a joke is reality in Omalo, on Georgia’s frontier with Russia, where eagles usually outnumber foreign visitors.”

This is how I will always remember the OSCE, an organization that reaches parts other organizations cannot (paraphrasing the famous ad of a Dutch beer company — and here, I tip my hat to the European Union Presidency).

The OSCE is also a hands-on organization, where personal effort, initiative, commitment and inventiveness dispense with any structural automata. It remains the eminently politico-diplomatic instrument that has dramatically changed the fabric of Europe over the past 30 years. This is a place where the art and craft of diplomacy find their most suitable setting, where networking prevails over hierarchical and bureaucratic reflexes.

For more than 20 years — more than half of my professional life — I have been involved, without interruption, in multilateral diplomacy. Never have I been as comfortable as in the OSCE, where through fair weather and foul, we maintain a strong sense that the work we do is worthwhile. In fact, we often behave as though our personal involvement can *actually* make a difference.

The Organization is no Ferrari, rather a mountain bike that is much more useful on rugged terrain. However, this implies a shared will to ride it and steer it, with hardly any room available in the back seat. In terms of good governance, a concept that has become so dear to us, one could say that one obtains results from the OSCE only to the extent that one invests in it. The OSCE’s good practices make it akin to a participant sport, where one can sit out the action from time to time, but where one cannot just stand permanently on the sidelines and then complain that the game observed is not to one’s liking.

The OSCE is a work in progress, part of the evolution of the species that is currently under way in every other international security organization. Compared to them, the OSCE may not project an impressive silhouette and its deliberations are not necessarily decisive. Geared as it is to the production and assimilation of consensus in a comprehensive manner — from the prevention of crises, through conflict resolution, to post-conflict rehabilitation — the OSCE is serving its very specific purpose, and will continue to do so.

Essentially, it is a politico-diplomatic, behavioural mechanism (another one of our beloved buzzwords!), based on a gradual weaving of the fabric of international law. And the production of international law is

what the whole international community is now engaged in, under the name of “effective multilateralism”, which even the European Union has embroidered on its banner.

This was a wonderful and highly stimulating environment to be in. I wish to thank many sparring partners, holding diverse positions, with whom I shared more exalting moments than depressing ones, who always challenged me to fast footwork. If this weren’t a metaphor, my doctor would be very happy. I had to tell him that my job implied long sittings and explain that the Organization relied on a process of sedimentation akin to geology — constantly piling up and washing out ideas and initiatives, but slowly and surely changing our landscape. Among 55 nations, that is no mean feat, the full value of which future generations will recognize. I leave with the conviction that the OSCE is good for the EU, as the latter develops its political profile and its Security Strategy.

Finally, my gratitude also goes to the Italians working in the Secretariat, institutions and field operations, who are now much more numerous than when I first arrived, and who have all been working hard to promote the good name of the OSCE and, in the process, the reputation of my country.

To all of you, *arrivederci!*

Ambassador Guido Lenzi, who assumed the post of Head of the Permanent Mission of Italy to the OSCE in October 2000, delivered these parting remarks to the Permanent Council on 22 July 2004. A law graduate from the University of Florence, his diplomatic postings have included Algiers, Lausanne, London, Moscow and New York. From 1995 to 1999, he served as the Western European Union’s Director of the Institute for Security Studies in Paris.