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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 907th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

29 March 2012

**Regarding problems in the work of the
OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights**

Mr. Chairperson,

The subject of elections and election monitoring has, after difficult discussions, been included in the plan for “third basket” events during the current year. This subject will be examined at the Second Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting in Vienna scheduled for 12 and 13 July.

I should like to explain in some detail the reason for our insistence in this matter. We are disturbed, first of all, by the continuing one-sided approach in the practice and working methodology of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), an institution we all respect, in this area.

The monitoring of election processes, particularly with regard to their adherence to the CSCE 1990 Copenhagen Document, must be carried out by the ODIHR in all OSCE countries on a basis of equality and according to the same objective and transparent principles.

As shown by the results of recent election monitoring, problems in electoral legislation and practice exist in all OSCE countries without exception. They exist in our country and in countries that are our neighbours. They also exist in States that regard themselves as being among the so-called established democracies. This is confirmed not only in the conclusions drawn by ODIHR missions but also in assessments by non-governmental organizations.

For example, in one of the largest OSCE countries, one that regards itself as a role model for the development of democracy, ODIHR experts during the most recent elections there identified a whole range of substantial failings, including a failure to conform with the commitments prescribed under the Copenhagen Document. What I am referring to has to do with the following points. There is a failure to observe election secrecy since there are many cases when ballots are sent by post or by fax. On frequent occasions members of the Office’s monitoring mission are refused permission to observe the voting procedure at the polling

stations. There is insufficient transparency as regards the financing of election campaigns. It is also well known that restrictions on financing of this kind have been completely abolished. On occasion there is a lack of clear information regarding the results of the vote-counting. In a number of localities candidates are elected unopposed. A separate problem concerns the question of voter registration. Many voters, according to data compiled by research centres, are not included in the electoral rolls at all, while some are simultaneously registered in different places. Beyond all criticism is the situation when the registers contain the names of nearly two million deceased persons.

As far as another large country is concerned, it is well known that experts from a needs assessment mission discovered a whole range of shortcomings in its electoral process, but nevertheless decided it would be inadvisable to monitor the elections. As a reason for their decision not to monitor they put forward a strange argument to the effect that monitoring would produce no “substantial good” since the State in question is in any case failing to implement most of the ODIHR’s previous recommendations.

Faced with this kind of situation, the ODIHR should adopt the only possible decision, namely to dispatch to these countries fully fledged missions to thoroughly monitor all aspects of the electoral process. However, for a strange variety of reasons this is not happening. Accordingly, there is a specific category of States for which incomprehensible exceptions are made, while the violations identified there are evaluated as unsubstantial and without any effect on the outcome of the voting. Acting on the basis of this “human approach”, the ODIHR at best dispatches to these countries limited monitoring “teams” with a less comprehensive mandate for a short period of time, or it sends no one at all.

We fail to understand the logic here. What I mean is that the more poorly a country carries out its recommendations, the less willing is the ODIHR to engage in monitoring there. And conversely – the more actively a country co-operates with the Office, the more demands are made of it. Why one approach is applied with respect to some countries and a completely different one in the case of others where similar shortcomings have been identified is something we fail to understand.

What however we view as completely unjustified are the ODIHR’s decisions not to conduct full-scale election monitoring in countries where whole categories of the population, so-called non-citizens, are altogether deprived of the right to vote. The failure of the Office to confront this situation abets the continuing discrimination of an enormous number of men and women who have been deprived of their right to take part in elections.

This kind of selective approach is in clear contrast with the ODIHR’s position as regards the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Year after year, these countries are literally invaded by hordes of observers who, almost as though they were holding timers in their hands, record the slightest deviations, even those of a technical nature, from the Office’s self-established rules. There is no shortage of critical comments, often based on the conclusions of “unnamed interlocutors”. Many things to which the ODIHR turns a blind eye in some countries are presented in other countries as evidence of their “democratic immaturity”.

At the same time, it would be useful not only to properly evaluate but also to arm oneself with the in many respects unique experience of the CIS countries, including Russia, in ensuring openness and transparency in electoral processes. Our country was the first in the

world to introduce the practice of installing webcams at virtually all polling stations during the presidential elections held on 4 March of this year. A video image of the voting process was transmitted via the Internet, and all who wished to do so were able to observe that process in action.

In the ODIHR's selective approach one can see a clear political motivation. This undermines confidence in the Office's ability to fully and objectively perform its mandate as regards election monitoring.

We are convinced that it would be possible to overcome the practice of applying double standards only through reliance on an objective normative basis governing election monitoring approved by the decision-making bodies of the OSCE. Russia together with its partners in the Collective Security Treaty Organization as long ago as 2007 proposed a draft of "Basic principles for the organization of the observation of national elections by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights". With a view to further developing this initiative, a number of delegations, including the Russian delegation, put forward at the Ministerial Council meeting in Vilnius a draft decision concerning agreement on a single set of rules to govern monitoring of this kind. This work must be preceded by a comparative analysis of the election legislation and practices in participating States. Considering the experience the ODIHR can draw on, this should not put much of a drain on the Office's facilities or resources.

We are confident that the implementation of these proposals will help to enhance the authority of the Office and to strengthen confidence in its work and assessments.

Thank you for your attention.