



PERMANENT DELEGATION  
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING  
STATEMENT BY THE AMBASSADOR OF NORWAY  
METTE KONGSHEM

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS  
WORKING SESSION 10

Warszawa, October 9, 2006

**Mr. Moderator,**

ODIHR has a well developed methodology for comprehensively observing the electoral process before, during and after elections. The methodology has served the OSCE/ODIHR well and has been adopted by other organisations in Europe and outside the OSCE area.

Norway has high regard for the election-related work of the ODIHR as well as its election observation methodology. The work is carried out in a professional and balanced way. ODIHR is an autonomous institution and that must be preserved. In our view autonomy equals impartiality.

At the same time, with the experience of the last 10 years in observing elections comprehensively and taking into account new developments and challenges, we do agree that this methodology can be further developed. Norway therefore welcomes the ongoing discussions on election observation and look forward to

ODIHR's report dealing with part II of MC Dec 17/05. We will study its conclusions and recommendations with great interest. In this regard we would also appreciate hearing from ODIHR what they see as the main trends and challenges of our electoral processes.

We should also bear in mind that elections are not only a purely technical question. The political context should be taken into account, independent judiciary and effective legal remedies, media freedom and political confidence in the electoral processes are important elements in the overall picture. Political will to implement commitments is of course the crux of the matter.

**Mr. Moderator,**

We see three ways of further strengthening our work in this area. First, a few adjustments regarding the organization of the election observation missions, secondly some additional commitments (Copenhagen +) and last but not least better follow-up between elections:

On the first point, regarding organizational aspects, we believe improvements can be made in the following areas:

- All participating States should make efforts to second observers in order for ODIHR to achieve a good mix of nationalities. Norway contributes to the Diversification Fund allowing nationals from more participating States to take part in Election Observation Missions. We believe the fund can become an even better tool in our efforts to strengthen the ODIHR/OSCE election activities.
- The selection of Mission Heads could be made more transparent. An open roster could be created from which ODIHR can select.
- English must remain the working language. However, every effort should be made to second election observers with a good knowledge of Russian for elections in CIS States.

- Training of observers is necessary to secure sufficient professionalism and qualifications.
- Challenges in establishing democratic rule and a fragile civil society in many participating States, as well as limited human and financial resources in ODIHR, have necessitated a certain focus in the election monitoring work of the ODIHR. But we realize that certain problems can also exist in States with longstanding democratic credits. But if we ask for more election activities we must also be ready to provide the necessary resources to ODIHR.

On the second point: The Copenhagen commitments of 1990 remain valid and should be implemented by all. We are however reminded that the ministers, three years ago, at the Maastricht ministerial, tasked the Permanent Council, drawing on expertise of ODIHR, to consider the need for additional commitments on elections, supplementing existing ones, and report to the next Ministerial. This issue has still to be dealt with, and the discussions we have had give us ample food for thought together with the possible proposals by ODIHR. Additional commitments could be adopted. In our view we should revisit the so-called Copenhagen + text which was on the table a year ago.

Mr. Moderator, on my third point I would state that we need to pay much more attention to participating States political follow-up to observation missions. Election observation and assessment reports are tools that should be better used to achieve a more systematic implementation and thereby electoral and democratic reform. Norway has previously suggested establishing a mechanism whereby the country in question provides a plan on how it intends to implement the recommendations in the final report. This plan, together with the ODIHR final report should then be discussed in a framework of peer review, in the Preparatory Committee or in a possible Human Dimension Committee.

**Mr. Moderator**, in closing let me once again underline that Norway highly values ODIHR's excellent work regarding elections. We look forward to concerted efforts by all 56 participating States and their full support for ODIHR's election monitoring work, which is a cornerstone in strengthening democracies for the benefit of all of us.

I thank you.