



**PERMANENT DELEGATION  
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE DIRECTOR OF ODIHR,  
AMBASSADOR JANEZ LENARCIC**

As delivered by Ambassador Guttorm Vik  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
25 march 2010

**Mr. Chairperson,**

Let me first join the previous speaker in warmly welcoming ODIHR Director Janez Lenarcic back to the Permanent Council and thanking him for his comprehensive report, which provides us with a good overview of the most important developments in ODIHR's field of responsibility. The report demonstrates once again the crucial importance of having independent institutions to monitor the fulfillment of all the joint commitments we have freely undertaken, and to assist participating Governments in their implementation.

The report contains a number of interesting features well worthy of comment and support. Fortunately, I can subscribe fully to the views and positions just put forward by the distinguished Spanish ambassador on behalf of the EU, so I can use my allotted time to offer some comments on one particular issue, namely the all-important theme of elections and election observation, which also was the lead item in Mr. Lenarcic' report.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

As we have stated time and again, we are justly proud of the OSCE contribution to international election observation, for which we are particular indebted to ODIHR and its internationally acclaimed methods for observing **before, during and after** elections. We applaud the efforts currently undertaken to update and further refine this methodology, because it is very important that it remains a living instrument, benefiting from continuous development, in order to take account of technological and societal developments and of experience gained.

This methodology has again proven its worth on a number of recent occasions, not least the Presidential elections in Ukraine, where a massive and fairly well coordinated observation effort was crucial in providing legitimacy to the result and preventing unrest after a polarized and very closely fought election campaign. This illustrates the importance of having the same **criteria**, but not necessarily the same **format** for all election observations. A limited observation mission, staying for a few days, as some have advocated, would not have had the same credibility.

The recent parliamentary elections in Tadjikistan provided an example of elections that were seriously flawed in many respects, but where the OSCE-coordinated election observation must be characterized as very successful and useful, providing a well documented overview

of systemic flaws that need to be improved before the next election. We have noted that some observers found the conduct of the elections to be in line with national and international rules and commitments, but it is difficult to understand how they could have missed the shortcomings that were so clearly visible to everybody else.

We are gratified that the cooperation between ODIHR and our Parliamentary Assembly seems to have been reasonably good during the latest observation missions, and would once more underline the crucial importance of a good partnership, with full respect for each other's roles and competences. This partnership and good cooperation must also be fully extended to observers from other organizations committed to the same rules and values, such as the Council of Europe and the European Parliament.

**Finally, Mr. Chairperson,**

I would like to pay a particular tribute to ODIHR for its very valuable role in observing the Parliamentary elections in Norway in September last year, which also figured in Mr. Lenarcic's presentation. As usual, ODIHR sent first a Needs Assessment Mission to determine the extent of the observation required, which proved to be very well tailored to the particular situation of Norway, and issued a very thorough and well-documented report after the elections.

I am happy to confirm that my authorities found this report very useful and decided to avail themselves fully of ODIHR's generous offer to assist in the follow-up to the elections. Accordingly, a high-powered team from ODIHR visited Oslo in January to discuss the findings and provide advice on possible improvements, and ODIHR also participated actively in the main post-election evaluation exercise for the electoral officials that took place in Trondheim in March.

The competent Norwegian authorities are currently considering further practical steps to perfection our election system, including possible legislative initiatives, availing themselves of further advice from ODIHR. I shall be pleased to provide further information to the Council if and when such initiatives materialize.

Let me conclude by wishing Mr. Lenarcic and his excellent team every success in their further work, and ensuring him of our continued and full support.

**Thank you, Mr. Chairperson**