



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

STATEMENT BY NORWAY

As delivered by Counsellor Lars Løberg to the 2012 Human Dimension implementation meeting, Warsaw 2 October 2012 – Working Session 15

Thank you, Madame Moderator,

Over the previous 14 working sessions we've heard over and over again how respect for the fundamental freedoms and the human rights are core and basic elements for a democratic development. This session, on the other hand, we're discussing how democratic elections can be and are supposed to be the final proof of the same democratic development. In this respect, democratic elections become the jewel in the crown of the human dimension. And the more important we deem democratic elections to be, the more important is it to monitor and observe elections and to have a fair and commonly agreed way to evaluate the election proceedings in each and every participating State.

Madame Moderator,

We've listened over and over again to the thematic controversy between those who argue in favor of developing a common methodology for election observation and those who claim that such a methodology already exists in form of the methodology developed and refined over more than two decades by ODIHR. The one referred to by other international organizations in this field as something of a gold standard. The Kazakh proposals we just heard to downsize the observations will effectively ruin this gold standard. Instead, we need to make sure that ODIHR has sufficient funding to continue observations as thorough as we've grown used to see them.

We may disagree on whether there are double standards and why the observation reports tend to be more skeptic to elections held in relatively less developed democracies than in the relatively more established ones. That is a just debate. But it is a just debate only as long as the debate is based on a common will to make improvements, and to seriously consider the messages about recommendations for improvement rather than attacking the messenger.

I have reasons to believe that there still are participating States that have a hidden agenda. That there still are certain participating States that are aware of possible shortcomings in their

democratic elections, but who regard this as a national debate, not an issue for the entire OSCE community.

They who may think so, are wrong. In Astana, our Heads of State agreed “*that the commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned*”. Since the democratic elections are the best evaluation of how those commitments are being undertaken, it goes without saying that we are all concerned and that we’re all entitled to speak up.

Norway set an example by giving the OSCE a full report on our cooperation with ODIHR on the national follow up of the recommendations given by the election observers in 2009, and we are engaged in follow-up discussion with ODIHR on the basis of their final report and recommendations for improvements after the introduction of e-voting at our elections last year. Others have done the same. But to my deep regret, there are still participating States, both east and west of Vienna, that seem to be unwilling to engage in such cooperation or in an open debate on how to improve their democratic elections.

Madame Moderator,

We have this year again registered that one main obstacle for thorough election observation is how to finance the missions. It has become more difficult to make participating States nominate and second observers and we have also noticed a lack of funding, or, rather, a deficit in ODIHR’s own budget. I realize that election observations are a huge part of ODIHR’s unified budget. And it is rightfully so. Given the importance of this jewel in the crown, we all have a common obligation to see to it that ODIHR becomes more resources for this, not less.

Madame Moderator,

I started out by saying that we have a debate on election observations in the OSCE. That debate took a new direction when we heard the statement from the OSCE PA President in the opening session. The PA representative used unprecedented strong words against ODIHR. He talked about a practice of malpractice. This made me recall an internal strife that used to be between the OSCE and the OSCE PA. A strife I thought was long dead, particularly as the relations between ODIHR and the PA during his predecessor Efthymiou seemed to be working smoothly, though apparently not so.

We can no longer risk speaking with different voices from within the same organization. The basis for the relationship between ODIHR and the PA should be one of partnership, which excludes any notion of hierarchy. From Copenhagen to Rome and Budapest, ODIHR was tasked to enhance and strengthen its role in delivering a comprehensive approach to election monitoring, and in Brussels, ODIHR, in implementing it’s mandate, was duly recognized for having demonstrated its ability to assist the participating states in fulfilling their human dimension

commitments, including in their election-related activities. Needless to say, Norway firmly subscribes to this recognition. Norway also firmly believes in the value added by the PA in election observation activities, carried out by elected officials themselves. These values added, ODIHR expertise in conducting comprehensive assessments of the whole process, before, during and after the elections and the PAs contribution as a high-level peer review should be seen as complimentary, and neither competing nor conflicting.

Recalling the efforts made by the Greek Chair, I would encourage the Irish and the incoming Ukrainian Chairmanship to ensure that the many occasions when ODIHR and the PA have co-operated in smooth partnership on the basis of their complementary roles and mandates become institutionalized as best practise, as was the case in Belarus recently, and not malpractice.

Madame Moderator, thank you for your attention.