

PC.DEL/232/12  
16 March 2012

ENGLISH  
Original: GERMAN

Delegation of Switzerland

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF SWITZERLAND AT THE  
MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

15 March 2012

**Regarding the report by Mr. Janez Lenarčič,  
Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights**

Mr. Chairperson,

We thank the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) for the present report, which provides eloquent testimony to the comprehensive achievements of the ODIHR in supporting the participating States in the implementation of their commitments.

I should like to outline five points.

1. In 2011 the ODIHR sent an election assessment mission to the parliamentary elections in Switzerland. We are grateful for the report, which, among other things, highlighted some of the problems with respect to Internet voting. The relevant authorities in Switzerland intend to study the recommendations carefully and take steps to implement them where appropriate. We are remaining in contact with the ODIHR on this matter. In connection with that mission, we were once again able to see how effectively and professionally the ODIHR operates in this area. I might add that we shall continue to support the ODIHR through the secondment of long- and short-term election observers.

Allow me at this point to also make a general comment regarding the current discussion about election observation. It has become fashionable for participating States to criticize the ODIHR for making critical statements and calling for improvements to be made or to even threaten not to invite the ODIHR to the next elections. We have little understanding for this, since the ODIHR is simply implementing the mandate given to it by the participating States. This does not mean that we cannot discuss election observation methods. Nothing is perfect, and there is even the possibility that in the course of such discussions other organizations can learn from the ODIHR. What is clear, however, is that this debate must never result in a restriction in the ODIHR's autonomy to evaluate elections.

2. We welcome the ODIHR's willingness to do its utmost to support co-operation with the Mediterranean partner countries. We regard taking the values and principles of the OSCE beyond its borders as an important element of partnership relations. In doing this it should be

ensured that the ODIHR has the necessary freedom to act in an “enterprising” and proactive manner.

3. Switzerland thanks the ODIHR for the report on the monitoring of trials in Belarus from March to July 2011. We remain concerned about the unequal access to justice and the detention conditions in Belarus. We call on the Belarusian authorities to act on the recommendations made in the report and to resume co-operation with the OSCE in this and other areas.

Mr. Chairperson,

4. The ODIHR Director mentioned the reform process concerning human dimension events. A study by the Swiss think tank Ximpulse is intended to contribute to this process. In the course of this week hypotheses regarding possible options for adapting events in the human dimension will be tested in consultation with the delegations in Vienna, the ODIHR and civil society. The outcome of the study is scheduled to be published at the end of the month and presented to the Human Dimension Committee on 17 April.

This is, however, just the beginning of diplomatic work, especially if we want to have a concrete result as soon as possible after the summer recess, e.g., a revision of Permanent Council Decision No. 476 (2002) on modalities for OSCE meetings on human dimension issues. Compromises will be required from all parties if we want to make events in the human dimension more attractive, more effective and more focused.

5. We are pleased to be able to continue the close co-operation begun last year between the ODIHR and the Human Dimension Committee this year too. The regular exchange promotes transparency and understanding as to how the participating States can profit from the ODIHR’s expertise. As the Chairperson of the Committee I should therefore like to take this opportunity to thank ODIHR Director Lenarčič and his staff for their comprehensive support.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.