



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

Statement on the Presidential election in the Russian Federation

As delivered by Ambassador Guttorm Vik
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
6 March 2008

Mr. Chairman,

There is no doubt that the newly elected president of the Russian Federation enjoys great support among Russian voters, and Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg has congratulated President-Elect Dmitry Medvedev.

Offering some final comments on the electoral campaign, the conduct of the elections and election observation, I would first like to observe that it was clear that limitations were placed on the way opposition candidates could present themselves and their programmes to the electorate during the electoral campaign. We therefore continue to be concerned over the democratic development in Russia, with restrictions on the freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and control over civil society.

As regards the conduct of the elections, we note that, in the absence of observers from ODIHR and from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, observers from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe made some critical remarks in relation to the way the elections were carried out.

The most serious shortcoming from an OSCE point of view, however, was the absence of a full-fledged observation mission from ODIHR covering the whole electoral process, "before, during and after the elections". As has been pointed out in the Permanent Council before, and as referred to by the PACE observation mission, the quality of election observation depends to a significant extent on the information provided by ODIHR – not least the media monitoring analysis. ODIHR's long-term observation is a precondition for conducting a meaningful short-term observation. We therefore restate our regret that ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, due to restrictions imposed by the host state, could not conduct a full-fledged election observation, according to their well-established and highly valued methodology.

Norway expects that this methodology again will be fully employed in future elections, in the Russian Federation and across the entire OSCE region.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.