



**PERMANENT MISSION  
OF TURKEY TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR YUSUF BULUÇ,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF TURKEY  
ON OSCE/ODIHR ELECTION ASSESSMENT MISSION REPORT  
ON EARLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN TURKEY**

(Permanent Council, 13 December 2007)

Mr. Chairman,

On 27 November 2007 the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights has published the report of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Assessment Mission on the early parliamentary elections conducted in Turkey on 22 July 2007. Today I would like to share our comments on the report with the Permanent Council.

We appreciate this effort by ODIHR for having allocated time and resources at a particular juncture when they are much in demand elsewhere, not least as a demonstration of evenhandedness, to dispatch an assessment mission to Turkey, a participating State with a proven track record for mature election practices conducted to meet the internationally accepted norms and standards. It was with that sense of appreciation that the report was closely and critically studied by us. Like in other instances of ODIHR's election reporting, not all its findings and recommendations qualified for unreserved subscription or endorsement. Herein is an illustration but not an exhaustive list of our observations:

We welcome that the report underscores "the elections demonstrated the resilience of the election process in Turkey, characterized by pluralism and high level of public confidence". Inclusive registration of political parties and independent candidates which offered the electorate a wide and genuine choice, diverse and vibrant media, comprehensive legal framework for elections conducive to the delivery of a democratic process, transparent, professional and efficient performance of the election administration, calm and orderly counting could be cited as the main positive highlights of the report.

The report also draws attention to some legislative and technical issues where there is room for improvement. We have taken note of the recommendations contained in the report and have already conveyed them to those institutions involved in the election process to be addressed as appropriate.

Overall, the presence and activities of the Election Assessment Mission was characterized by a mutually beneficial dialogue and cooperation between my authorities and the ODIHR. It is a source of satisfaction for us that this spirit of constructive cooperation has also been reflected

in the report which my side will take equally as a source of encouragement to continue its cooperation.

Mr. Chairman,

ODIHR's election assessments are credible as long as the presumption that they are based on a sound methodology and reliable information remains unquestionable. On the other hand, for its methodology to excel, the ODIHR itself may benefit from a critical review of its assessment reports. In this regard, I should like to offer the following views:

We note that the ODIHR's election assessment methodology has been further developed to incorporate a closer examination of the participation of persons belonging to national minorities in electoral processes in recent years. This must be as delicate matter for ODIHR as it continually is for our High Commissioner on National Minorities. In the absence of an internationally agreed definition of national minorities, the ODIHR, like the High Commissioner on National Minorities, in determining the scope and the object of its examination in order to credibly execute its mandate on election observation must pay due regard to the interpretations of the participating States of the commitments they have undertaken in line with the international law and practice related to the persons belonging to national minorities. Although the ODIHR report acknowledges Turkey's stance as registered in various OSCE documents on national minorities, it proceeds to provide "unofficial estimates" regarding the populations of a number of casually selected groups in a separate section on "participation of minorities", thus portraying those groups as "minorities". We urge ODIHR to treat this matter with greater care and attention in its future election-related activities. It must be understood by our colleagues at the ODIHR that the quality of their reporting would suffer from arbitrariness and institutional zeal and audacity by seeking to surpass the High Commissioner on matters related to persons belonging to national minorities.

Another issue of concern for my authorities was the lack of recognition of the legitimate framework of the restrictions on the freedoms and rights rendered permissible by international law. In this context, it is important to recall that international law allows for specific prohibitions that are applicable in cases of incitement to discrimination, hostility, violence or terrorism. A recommendation to repeal lawfully legislated provisions that prohibit propaganda of a terrorist network might give the impression that ODIHR is not an institutional part of this Organization which is at the vanguard of international fight against terrorism. Furthermore, the proposition that allowing for the insult of the memory of the founder of the Turkish Republic would contribute to a more democratic election process is not just a hollow argument but one that borders on political insensitivity.

Mr. Chairman,

Turkey is one of the supporters of the ODIHR in its diverse activities, including election observation. Our present remarks are offered as a contribution to our collective efforts for strengthening the ODIHR's capacity to assist and cooperate with the participating States. I say this being fully cognizant of fact that today ODIHR needs honest and constructive views of its candid supporters more than ever.

Thank you.