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Swedish Presidency of the European Union

**Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Warsaw, 8 October 2009**

EU Statement, Working Session 17: Democratic Institutions

Mr/Ms Chairperson,

The OSCE participating States have confirmed the importance of democratic institutions and democratic governance for a vigorous democracy and a lasting order of peace, security, justice and co-operation in numerous OSCE documents. Most notably they were reflected in the 1990 Copenhagen Document, the 1990 Charter of Paris and the 1999 Istanbul Charter for European Security.

The EU believes that no sustainable progress could be achieved towards effective democratic governance without the conduct of democratic elections.

The EU express its appreciation to OSCE/ODIHR as a leading actor in election observation and to the work of ODIHR in continuously assisting participating states to conduct elections in compliance with

OSCE commitments and international standards for democratic elections.

The EU remains convinced that all participating States have the responsibility in fulfilling election-related commitments. It is essential that fundamental principles of free and fair elections - access to media, freedom of speech, association and peaceful assembly, registration of candidates, establishment of electoral lists, clear voter-registration guidelines, transparency and accountability of the vote count - are respected. In this regard, electoral observation is the main OSCE instrument to assist participating states to conduct democratic elections and remains a flagship activity of this organisation. Moreover, in order for the ODIHR to continue providing us with its expertise assistance we believe it is essential that it retains its impartial mandate.

The EU welcomes the report by ODIHR on the elections to the European Parliament. The EU greatly values ODIHR's expertise and assessment of the elections. The democratic process is a living process where improvements, in new as well as in old democracies, can be made. In this regard, the recommendations by ODIHR are of great value. The EU urges all participating states to invite ODIHR to observe their elections in accordance with their commitments and without restrictions.

The EU welcomes efforts made by participating States, to conduct free and fair elections in line with their OSCE commitments. But at the same time the EU remains concerned that in some participating States still exist numerous limitations to conduct democratic elections. The EU therefore urges all participating States to

demonstrate that democratic elections are a vital component of OSCE commitments and the cornerstone of democracy.

The EU believes that the remaining challenges could be resolved by participating States in co-operation with ODIHR and full implementation of its recommendations. Therefore, the EU proposes to enhance the follow-up of ODIHR's recommendations and to ensure more political involvement in this process. The EU recommends that a more concrete and dynamic follow up should be made at the political level of the OSCE. The Permanent Council should assume a reporting and the implementation of ODIHR's recommendations. The EU calls upon all participating states to fully cooperate with ODIHR.

The EU remains concerned about the attempts to interfere with ODIHR's election observation mission. Numerous elections in OSCE participating States, in which ODIHR was permitted to work without restrictions, have clearly shown the ODIHR's ability to conduct professional election observation throughout the OSCE region. The observations are in accordance with its standard methodology, which has been developed over many years and with which we are content.

Election observation is an essential part of the EU activities to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The EU has assisted ODIHR with electoral assistance projects and various instruments for financial and technical co-operation. The EU also welcomes ODIHR's support of the second presidential and provincial elections in Afghanistan where ODIHR's Election Support Team has conducted its work with great success.

The EU underlines the importance of cooperation between the OSCE/ODIHR and the respective parliamentary bodies engaged in election observation. Co-operation based on a Co-operation Agreement in 1997 between the ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly remains a key to our common success.

Coherence of efforts in election observation is of vital importance and the EU welcomes the cooperation between ODIHR and other international bodies, such as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the European Parliament, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe.

The EU would like to thank the Greek OSCE Chairmanship for organizing Expert Seminar on Electoral Management Bodies which took place in Vienna on 16-17 July on the structure and composition of Electoral Management Bodies, the integrity of elections as well as follow-up and implementation of election related commitments.

The EU reiterates its view that democracy is not restricted only to democratic elections. The OSCE Participating States have agreed through their human dimension commitments that pluralistic democracy based on the rule of law is the only system of government suitable to guarantee human rights effectively.

The EU stresses the importance of the involvement of citizens in governance in a continuous manner. This engagement can be ensured through a wider and deeper understanding of people's day-

to-day experience of living democracy. A well-informed public is a prerequisite for democratic processes to work. The public should not only be provided with different mechanisms to interact with government authorities but should also be motivated to do so. Civil society could contribute to strengthening democratic governance in a constructive and critical way by assessing the democratic performance of institutions through oversight of, and dialogue with, all branches of government.

The EU stands committed to the OSCE promotion of human rights, democracy and “good governance“, including the rule of law, freedom of media and free, fair, and competitive elections.

The European Union reiterates its determination to continue to fully co-operate with the ODIHR as well stress determination to continue to support its broader range of support in strengthening democratic institutions and processes.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia, EFTA countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.