
562nd Plenary Meeting

PC Journal No. 562, Agenda item 9

**DECISION No. 686
ELECTION SUPPORT TEAM TO AFGHANISTAN**

The Permanent Council,

Taking note of the letter by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, to the OSCE Chairman-in-Office of 26 November 2004, inviting the OSCE to observe the upcoming National Assembly and Provincial Councils elections in Afghanistan,

Also referring to the letter by the Chairman of the Joint Election Management Body of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Mr. Besmillah Besmil, addressed to the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Dr. Dimitrij Rupel, of 6 June 2005, inviting the OSCE to be present to observe Afghanistan's National Assembly and Provincial Councils elections.

Taking note of the findings of the OSCE/ODIHR Exploratory Mission to Afghanistan from 26 May to 1 June 2005,

Taking into consideration the status of Afghanistan as a Partner for Co-operation of the OSCE, which has an important impact also on neighbouring regions of the OSCE,

Underscoring the importance of democratic elections for fostering democracy and human rights and for furthering stability in Afghanistan, and contributing to international efforts to combat terrorism,

Taking note of Permanent Council Decision No. 622 of 29 July 2004 on sending an OSCE Election Support Team for the Presidential elections in Afghanistan on 9 October 2004,

Taking into account conditions in Afghanistan, in particular the security situation,

Decides, in response to the specific request of the Afghan Government, to send to the National Assembly and Provincial Councils elections in Afghanistan scheduled for 18 September 2005, an election support team, to be organized and led by the ODIHR and the Secretariat;

Decides that the main focus of the OSCE Election Support Team for the forthcoming elections should be to analyse the following key elements of the election environment:

- Electoral system, campaign and legislation,
- Electoral administration,
- Voter registration,
- Counting and vote tabulation,
- Complaints and appeals;

Also tasks the Election Support Team to prepare recommendations for improving future elections and for transferring election administration skills and resources to the national authorities. Such a mandate would not exclude giving advice to the authorities even during the elections as necessary. The Election Support Team should refrain from public statements assessing the election in line with OSCE commitments in order, *inter alia*, to remove any possibility for contradictions between OSCE elections activities in its region and any such activities outside of the OSCE region;

Requests that the ODIHR closely co-ordinate with other international and domestic election monitoring organizations in Afghanistan, including the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the European Union Observation Mission;

Tasks the Secretariat to conduct consultations with the Afghan Government, international military forces, as well as with the United Nations, in order to spell out clearly in the appropriate form and put in place the necessary security arrangements for the Election Support Team;

Recommends that the size of the Election Support Team should not exceed 50 election experts, to be seconded by OSCE participating States in accordance with the rules and procedures followed by the OSCE/ODIHR. Considering the still volatile security environment in Afghanistan, the OSCE/ODIHR should accept only election experts with relevant field experience appropriate to the circumstances.

Expenses for the Election Support Team will be covered by extrabudgetary contributions.

This decision does not set a precedent for OSCE activities beyond the Organization's geographical area of responsibility.