



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT ON THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN GEORGIA 21 MAY 2008

As delivered by Ambassador Guttorm Vik
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
29 May 2008

Mr. Chairman,

The parliamentary elections in Georgia on 21 May were held at a very important juncture in the democratic development of the country. Viewed against the background of recent internal and external developments, we are particularly pleased to note that the elections were conducted in a generally peaceful and orderly manner. We welcome the preliminary assessments of the international observers, who concluded that the Georgian electorate was given a real choice when electing their representatives and that the Georgian authorities made efforts to conduct the elections in line with Georgia's OSCE and Council of Europe commitments. We are also pleased to note that the international observers considered the conduct of the parliamentary elections to be an improvement over the presidential election held on 5 January this year.

At the same time, we are concerned over various and fairly serious shortcomings pointed out by the international observers, and we call on Georgia to take all necessary steps to address the problems identified. Although considerable progress has been made only in a few years, the elections demonstrated that Georgia still has some ground to cover as regards the perfecting of its electoral system.

Notwithstanding certain irregularities, the outcome of the elections left no doubt that the ruling United National Movement enjoys large popular support in Georgia, and we call on President Saakashvili and the UNM to use their new mandates to engage in a meaningful dialogue with the opposition. And we call on all political forces in the country to respect the election results and use only democratic means to promote their political agendas.

Recalling some previous discussions in the PC about election monitoring, we are also pleased to note another example of a very successfully conducted OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission. The international observers were able to fulfil their tasks before, during and after the elections, with full cooperation and assistance from the host country authorities, in accordance with well established procedures. However, we note that the conditions for some of the local

observers were less than ideal. All the observation reports, will however constitute an excellent tool for Georgia for the further perfecting of its democratic institutions and we note with satisfaction the assurances just pronounced by the representative of Georgia in this regard.

Thank you, Mr Chairman