



**PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE**

STATEMENT ON ODIHR'S ELECTION OBSERVATION METHODOLOGY

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 19 April 2018

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chair,

Free and fair elections are crucial to sustain the foundations of an effective and meaningful democracy. Not only on election day, but also in a free and fair run-up to the elections. Was the opposition able to campaign freely? Were the press and journalists able to do their job without risk of being harassed? Was peaceful assembly allowed?

The legitimacy of any government relies on elections that allow citizens to obtain information independently of the authorities, to participate in the democratic debate and to express their choices.

ODIHR's election observation, and advice on election legislation and practices, are fundamental for both safeguarding and strengthening democracy in the OSCE region. Norway is among the many participating States to have profited from ODIHR's assistance. Last, in September 2017 when an Election Expert Team observed our parliamentary elections.

The election observation of ODIHR is based on a comprehensive, consistent and systematic methodology that ensures credibility. ODIHR's Needs Assessment Missions apply the same methodology equally to all elections in all participating States. Participating States cannot always expect an ODIHR report to contain only praise. The value of an observation methodology is generated by its ability to uncover weaknesses and recommend improvements.

We all have something to learn from the observation missions. Rather than criticizing the methodology, we should look at our implementation of commitments to strengthen our democratic governance. Norway respects the autonomy of ODIHR, as well as its transparent, well-established, and well-known methodology.

To maintain ODIHR's expertise, independence and impartiality, participating States bear the responsibility to ensure that ODIHR has sufficient resources to fulfill its mandate.

Participating States must respect ODIHR's expertise, professionalism and impartiality. Attempts to politicize election observation are contrary to our own interests as participating States, and contrary to the interests of our voters. To avoid politicizing election observation we must respect the independence of ODIHR.

Thank you