

PC.DEL/670/09  
3 August 2009

ENGLISH  
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. VLADIMIR CHUROV,  
CHAIRMAN OF THE CENTRAL ELECTION COMMISSION OF THE  
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE OSCE CHAIRMANSHIP EXPERT  
SEMINAR ON ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BODIES**

Vienna, 16 and 17 July 2009

**Working Session III: Role of electoral management bodies in follow-up**

Its electoral system is a strategic resource for any country. Proof of this can be seen in the large number of persons involved in the electoral process, primarily the voters. True enough, one of the speakers in the previous session, probably without ill intent, excluded voters as participants in the electoral process. Secondly, there are the political parties with their candidates, campaigners, observers, agents and other activists, along with journalists, parliamentarians who adopt the necessary laws, the government with its responsibility for providing premises, transport and communications and for ensuring security at the polling stations, as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and election commissions. I might mention incidentally that in the Russian Federation some 5,500 persons are employed in permanent positions by the election commissions at all levels, some 3,000 of whom deal with administrative matters or are responsible for information.

I should also add that there has been a considerable increase in confidence in electoral bodies in Russia, with more than 50 per cent of the public now viewing their work favourably.

We see confirmation of the view that the electoral system is a strategic resource in the results, for example, of the elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Latin America. And even the recent events following the elections in Indonesia confirm this position.

The electoral system can be compared to a human being. It has a skeleton or a structure, in which there is the central electoral body and where interaction takes place with the higher-level courts, with subordinate organizations and the election commission system in the republics and territories of the Russian Federation, with the election commissions of the municipal entities, in addition to co-operation with non-governmental organizations, political parties and commercial enterprises and, lastly, with governmental agencies, administrations and parliaments.

If it is not to fall apart, this structure or skeleton needs to be covered with a kind of casing or "skin"; in other words, a normative basis in law must be created at all levels. In

Russia, this exists in the form of the normative legal basis at the federal and regional levels and at the level of local self-government.

Finally, if this organism is to begin to function, you have to “fill its vessels with blood”, i.e., you must see to it that it is regularly, adequately and periodically funded. The cost of the electoral system in different countries varies – from very expensive in the United States of America, Peru or even Indonesia, where there are 500,000 polling stations with an average voter attendance of up to 300 persons, to fairly inexpensive systems in Spain, Portugal, Russia and Ukraine.

Today, when we are all trying to save money, our main hope should be in televoting in remote places difficult to access and also for citizens abroad. In the first place, this will help voters retain their individualism and, in the second place, will make the electoral system considerably cheaper.

If you were to let me, I could probably go on for 12 hours or so talking about the structure of the electoral system in Russia, but there is no need for that. The powers of the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation and the system for resolving disputes are virtually the same as those described by my Lithuanian colleague. As for the rules governing election campaigning and information, what we have is more in line with the Belgian model. If the system is to be developed, we shall have to tackle the same problems that were discussed by the deputy head of the United States Election Assistance Commission. Instead, I shall be able to devote more time to the main topic of this session – what happens after the election.

In the Russian Federation, just as everywhere else, elections are prepared, elections are conducted, the votes cast are counted and a review of how the various laws were implemented is carried out. This “application of the law” concept includes the following stages:

- First stage: preparation and publication of a compendium of official electoral statistics for elections at all levels;
- Second stage: careful examination, analysis, review and publication of statements and complaints;
- Third stage: review and publication of the opinions of international observers;
- Fourth stage: review of the practical implementation of the laws on the basis of information received from election commissions, parties and competent civil society organizations, and presentation of this material to lawmakers;
- Fifth stage: participation in the analysis of draft legislation by experts;
- Sixth stage: co-operation with the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation and the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation in preparing and publishing compendiums of rulings by these courts on electoral matters.

In this connection it is not very important whether or not the central election agency has the right of legislative initiative. For example, in Russia most election commissions in the

territories and republics of the Russian Federation have that right, but the Central Election Commission does not, and is none the worse for it. Incidentally, one of the Russian NGOs has requested that it be given access to information regarding the way work is carried out following the tallying of official results in a number of countries, and about two months ago it contacted the appropriate electoral bodies and embassies of those countries with a request to that effect. Unfortunately, there has so far been no response. We would ask the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) to help us to acquaint ourselves with the work of our colleagues in this area.

President Medvedev's initiatives in amending election legislation have been reflected in laws now in effect, namely with the following consequences:

- There has been a further erosion of barriers to participation in parliamentary elections in the Russian Federation;
- Voters who cast their ballots for so-called “small parties” have been given guarantees that they will be represented;
- There has been a gradual reduction in the number of party members needed for the registration of a party and in the number of signatures required for the registration of a list of candidates. The security deposit has been abolished, leading to greater social equality;
- There has been a change in the procedure for the forming of the Federation Council, which will now be formed from deputies elected in the regions;
- The highest official of a republic or territory of the Russian Federation will also be put forward on the basis of proposals by the party that won the most votes in the regional elections;
- Stricter monitoring has been introduced to oversee the activities of local government heads, something that is generally in line with a return to the European traditions of local self-government on the basis of the Lübeck law;
- Guarantees have been given regarding the media coverage of the work of parliamentary parties in periods between elections. I am entirely in agreement here with my colleague as regards the need to take into account programmes broadcast not only during prime time;
- The terms of the constitutional powers of the President and of the State Duma have been increased to six and five years respectively.

The question of openness as regards information has been given particular attention. One aspect of this information openness has to do with the development of electronic voting, both at polling stations and for televoting. Intrinsic to these methods is the fact that they offer alternative ways or, more accurately, more than one way of voting, that they are transparent and that they provide maximum accessibility for systematic monitoring. And lastly, here there is room for a solution that might well be deserving of a Nobel Prize – devising a means enabling each voter to verify that his or her vote has been counted and, in so doing, to prevent the possibility of any unlawful buying up of votes.

It has by now become a commonplace to refer to the “information openness” of the electoral system as a consequence of the use of the Internet. The Russian site is one of the largest of those with which we are familiar. It contains 2.5 gigabytes of information, and 26 of the 32 accessible packages of information required by democratic standards are represented on our site alone.

The results of the voting at each of the 96,000 Russian polling stations are available not only on the website but also via mobile phone. Around 300,000 voters made use of this facility during the presidential elections in Russia in March 2008.

I might mention that in Russia, apart from the federal campaigns, there is also the concept of a “single day of voting”. The next “single day of voting” will take place on 11 October 2009. On that day, there will be 7,400 elections at various levels, three of them to parliaments of republics and territories of the Russian Federation. During each “single day of voting” in Russia, three hotlines are in operation, providing information on any problems that may arise. Two of these hotlines are operated by civil society institutions.

International monitoring is an instrument for improving the organization of elections, but is by no means an instrument for legitimizing authority, which depends solely on the people. In one country, for example, the principle of the “electoral quotient” is still not in operation. This is not something that you and I have invented but a British invention going back to the nineteenth century and requiring an approximately identical number of voters for each territory. The fact is that in the western part of the country I am referring to an electoral district has on average half as many voters as a district in the east or the south. In another country the margin of error in the voter lists on election day is as high as 50 per cent.

ODIHR missions in these countries are helping to resolve these problems.

From time to time, distinguished colleagues, various non-governmental organizations will approach you with special reports about the shortcomings of the Russian electoral system, offering them not for free but for money. Believe me when I tell you that you can get far more information quite officially and entirely free of charge because all the information that these people are offering you they get from the same publications that I have been talking to you about. Normal internal co-operation among specialists in electoral bodies could help in conducting elections in a number of countries and territories, for example in Kosovo, Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere.