



Human Dimension Implementation Meeting ODIHR activities

Monday, 9 October

Working session 10: Democratic institutions

Including: Democratic elections;

Democracy at the national, regional and local levels;

Citizenship and political rights;

Democratic Elections

The ODIHR has reported significant improvements in the legal and administrative framework for elections in several participating States in the last decade. Structural improvements are not, however, a guarantee that elections will be genuinely democratic. Authorities must show a commensurate level of political will to implement improved election procedures, which is still not being sufficiently demonstrated by a certain number of OSCE States. While the 1990 Copenhagen Document provides the principles for the conduct of genuine democratic elections, translating those into practice has proven to be a challenge. The ODIHRs task is to disseminate examples of good practices among the participating States to help bring electoral practices into line with OSCE commitments.

Election observation is not an end in itself. At the conclusion of any observation, the ODIHR formulates recommendations that address areas where the electoral practices should, or could, be improved. Ongoing challenges include the right to vote, free from interference and intimidation, but also the ever-present need to ensure transparency, accountability, and confidence in electoral processes, the issue of low voter turnout, as well as universal suffrage rights for voters and candidates. The participation of women, the inclusion of national minorities and access for disabled voters remain outstanding issues. Emerging challenges include new voting technologies, such as electronic voting.

ODIHR activities relating to this issue

ELECTION OBSERVATION

The ODIHR's election observation has principal objectives: (1) to assess to what degree an electoral process meets domestic law, OSCE commitments and other standards for democratic elections; and (2) to offer recommendations, where necessary, to support governments in implementing improvements. The purpose is to offer proactive and constructive input. So far, in 2006, more than 2,400 observers were deployed to six election observation missions, two assessment missions and one limited election observation mission.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Much of the ODIHR's election-related work is conducted through a range of technical-assistance projects. Some of these stem directly from recommendations made during observation missions; others are the result of requests from participating States.

- **Review of electoral legislation:** To address shortcomings in the election legislation of participating States, and to bring such legislation more closely in line with OSCE

Commitments, the ODIHR uses a voluntary fund to provide expert legal reviews and advice. So far, in 2006, the ODIHR has prepared 14 legislative reviews and opinions, many conducted jointly with the Council of Europe's Venice Commission in, for instance; Armenia, Croatia, Georgia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia/Serbia & Montenegro, Tajikistan and Ukraine.

- **'Copenhagen Plus':** In the wake of issues discussed at Supplementary Human Dimension Meetings in 2004 and 2005, OSCE States have entered into a discussion on possible commitments to supplement existing ones, which would provide OSCE States with an opportunity to enrich, reinforce, and amplify election-related commitments, not expressly stated in the 1990 Copenhagen Document. Three basic principles that are integral to democratic elections – transparency, accountability, and public confidence – could serve as the basis for additional commitments. ODIHR stands ready to assist to participating States in this dialogue.

- **Training of Election observers:** Recently, the ODIHR has established a project, based on voluntary contributions, on "Training of Election Observers. The project was initiated in response to requests from some OSCE participating States to provide training for election observers. This capacity-building project aims at further enhancing the level of experience and professionalism of international observers, with a particular emphasis on developing these skills among a broader range of nationals that represent a greater diversity of OSCE participating States.

While over the years the OSCE/ODIHR has supported national training programs for election observers, and continues to strongly encourage and support the development of such national training programs, this project will offer a complement to such efforts. At the outset, the project will focus on training of short-term observers from those OSCE participating States that are eligible for the OSCE/ODIHR voluntary Fund for the Diversification of EOMs. The first training will take place in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in November 2006. It will be implemented in cooperation with the OSCE Academy in Bishkek and with the participation of the OSCE Training Section in Vienna.

FOLLOW UP

The ODIHR is developing methods for engaging participating States in post-election follow-up of recommendations contained in ODIHR final reports. In a welcome development, a few States have sent a clear signal of their intent to engage in a follow-up dialogue. This year has seen follow up on implementation of recommendations in Albania, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia and Ukraine. The utility of follow-up activities will only be maximized when the respective national authorities are publicly committed to implement OSCE/ODIHR recommendations.

METHODOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS

OSCE/ODIHR aims to consistently improve the delivery of its election observation and assessment activities. In order to do this, the ODIHR has established an extra-budgetary programme "Election Observation Development", which includes projects on:

- **Domestic non-partisan election observation:** building on its experience in election observation, the ODIHR has implemented a project to promote the exchange of experience and best practice among domestic observers since 2001.
- **Media monitoring:** This project aims at the preparation of detailed guidelines on media analysis during Election Observation Missions and at training local media monitors.

- **Electronic voting (e-voting):** This project aims to generate wider expert discussion on the topic of observation of electronic voting systems and to subsequently develop guidelines on observation of electronic voting systems and other new voting technologies.
- **Diversification of Election Observation Missions:** Since the ODIHR established its Fund for Enhancing Participation in Election Observation Missions in 2001, around 1,000 long- and short-term observers have taken part in ODIHR observation missions. This has enabled the ODIHR to draw on a rich diversity of experience from 20 OSCE States that do not regularly send observers. The ODIHR recognizes the mutual benefit to be gained from greater participation of observers from new and developing democracies.
- **Voter registration:** This project aims to provide a forum for such discussion and exchange as well as to design guidelines how voter registration can best be observed.
- Over the past years, the ODIHR has continuously supported the **participation of women in election processes**. This project supported the development of methodology for observing the participation of women in elections, the publication of the *Handbook for Monitoring Women's Participation in Election*. Since 2004, the project allowed the ODIHR to include Gender Analysts in Election Observation Missions' Core Teams to ensure the implementation of this methodology.

Democracy at the national, regional and local levels; Citizenship and political rights;

More than a decade of OSCE work in the area of democracy-building has shown that democracy is more than a checklist of institutions and laws. A true, functioning democracy also requires the compatibility of norms, rules, and traditions of a society with a culture of seeking the common good through deliberation. For the last decade, political parties have not always been at the forefront of international democratization programmes in the OSCE region, despite the evident problems in a number of countries with regard to poor representation and accountability. However, political parties need to be effective in order to ensure the proper functioning of legislative structures. Indeed, if political parties are to foster democratic governance effectively, they need to govern themselves democratically as well.

Parliament, in turn, is the democratic institution *par excellence*, where citizens' opinions and government meet through the interaction of parties and factions, whether in opposition or in power. Institutional development of political parties and parliamentary reform are therefore two processes that should go hand-in-hand.

ODIHR activities relating to these issues

Promoting the development of political parties as democratic institutions

If elections provide legitimacy in form, they also mandate effective representation in substance. Effective representation can only be achieved if political frameworks provide a level playing field and if parties' structures allow their members – men and women – to be actively involved in their own governance. Without this, there can be no competitive politics, and without those, there is simply no democracy.

Together with the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) and the Tbilisi-based Caucasus Institute for Peace, Development and Democracy (CIPDD),

the ODIHR developed an analytical research methodology that has involved political parties in Georgia carrying out an interactive self-analysis.

Throughout 2005, Georgia's six main parties conducted, with the help of the three partners, a self-analysis exercise that concentrated on the *raison d'être* of their party, outreach and membership, women's participation and input into party programmes, public party finances, minority and geopolitical issues, relations between parties and factions in parliament, and relations between parties and the state. This analysis was published in September 2006.

This pilot project has already had a number of important results:

- Political parties have been involved as stakeholders, rather than just beneficiaries, allowing them to claim ownership of its progress and success;
- The interactive assessment has led to an increased capacity among parties for internal critical thinking; and
- The exercise has effectively demonstrated that multi-party co-operation is not only possible but also desirable.

Improving capacity for parliamentary reform

Just as the democratic development of political parties, parliamentary reform entails more than a simple combination of capacity-building, developing rules and procedures, and training. Strategic capacity is often weak or lacking in many of the parliaments in the OSCE region that face complex reform.

To address this deficiency, the ODIHR, together with the OSCE Mission to Georgia, assisted the Georgian parliament in setting up a Centre for Parliamentary Reform, which resides *within* the parliament. The Centre advises the Speaker and parliamentary leadership on parliamentary reform strategy and donor co-ordination and monitors the ongoing reform process to see if objectives and deadlines are met. Work on the Centre started in 2005 and it was opened in January 2006.

Building-up local capacity for political analysis

The main goal of this project is to strengthen the local capacity for political research and analysis. The majority of analysis of political processes is provided by foreign experts, and has in many cases two drawbacks: insufficient input of local knowledge and lack of local ownership, hence not taken up by local policy-makers. On basis on this methodology, the ODIHR has started a joint project with the Institute for Public Policy in Kyrgyzstan consisting of two main components: (i) strengthening capacity and resources of the Institute and (ii) raising awareness and capacity of relevant actors in political process.

A wide range of activities are currently being implemented: 1) Training of senior and junior research fellows to produce quality papers; 2) exchange internships with think-tanks; 3) set up a library of political science-related materials; 4) public outreach, regional networking and publications, incl. website development; 5) series of workshops for students of political science and media; 6) series of workshops for political parties; 7) series of roundtable discussions on public policy; 8) two country-wide surveys on selected issues of political/social importance. The project is to run until March 2007. The project aims to strengthen the Institute for Public Policy, so that it becomes a well-established network of researchers, capable of providing quality research on pressing political and social issues. It is especially important as large-scale political changes, including form of governance, electoral system, which require close work with political actors and research, are under discussion.