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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1019th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

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On the elections in Sweden

Mr. Chairperson,

It is in everyone's interest that commitments regarding elections be implemented in an honest and consistent manner in all participating States without any artificial differences between so-called old and new democracies. In this connection, we should like to express some thoughts on the general elections to the Riksdag (parliament) and to the regional and local authorities held in Sweden on 14 September.

Sweden has always held itself up as an example of the democratic development of society. Consequently, it did not consider it necessary to ensure the participation of international observers.

At the same time, according to information from several representatives of human rights organizations, a number of irregularities were observed during the elections. For example, there were incidents involving the loss of ballot papers. Three days after the elections, sacks containing around 1,000 advance votes were found in a safe in a regional post office in northern Sweden; someone had "forgotten" to pass them on to the polling stations in good time.

Worse still, election commission staff openly suggested to voters which political parties they should vote for. A number of citizens were unable to vote because for some reason they had been recorded as having already voted.

There are serious questions as regards ensuring secrecy of the vote in the Swedish electoral system. Every party has its ballot papers, which are on display in the polling stations. The voter must select from the various piles the form he or she wants, the name of the party being clearly visible on the ballot paper. Anyone present in the polling station can see what is happening. Of course, some voters took several ballot papers, in an attempt to keep their choice secret. However, ensuring the secrecy of the vote is a matter for the authorities and not ordinary citizens.

Furthermore, the increased role of radical right-wing parties and movements during the election campaign is cause for concern. For example, despite calls from the United Nations to introduce amendments to the legislation in accordance with the requirements of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Party of the Swedes, a neo-Nazi party, engaged in racist propaganda on the eve of the elections under police protection. Supporters of the Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir actively conducted an anti-election campaign, and members of the neo-Nazi Swedish Resistance Movement carried out attacks on four polling stations, destroying equipment and walking off with ballot papers.

The aforementioned facts suggest that even in States with long-standing democratic traditions, including countries of the European Union, there are serious shortcomings in electoral legislation and the organization of elections. The absence of international observers in Sweden on this occasion cannot be regarded as anything other than an attempt to hush up the unseemly situation in this area. In this connection, the drawing up of uniform standards and principles for election observation in all OSCE participating States without exception is a matter of increasing urgency.

Thank you for your attention.