



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

STATEMENT ON LOCAL ELECTIONS IN UKRAINE

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile
to the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 29 October 2015

Mr Chairman,

We congratulate Ukraine on last Sunday's local elections. According to ODIHR's preliminary report, the elections were generally competitive, well organized, and respected the democratic process. Voting and counting were deemed transparent and orderly overall. The elections showed important progress compared to previous local elections, and marked another significant step towards democratic consolidation for Ukraine – under difficult circumstances.

Mr Chairman,

The preliminary election report points to a number of irregularities, and we call on Ukraine to exert all effort to address them. We note that the irregularities were not considered systematic. We encourage Ukrainian authorities to report to us on how they intend to act on the recommendations in ODIHR's forthcoming final report.

It is important to take into account the challenges Ukraine faces when we evaluate the elections. These include most importantly Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and attempts to cripple Ukraine by destabilizing Donbass. But it is also challenging to hold local elections while undergoing far-reaching decentralization reforms.

We fully support Ukraine's reform efforts, and we are heartened by signs of progress, including the successful conduct of these elections.

Mr Chairman,

We commend ODIHR on their election observation. In challenging circumstances, ODIHR again demonstrated its professionalism by delivering a high quality preliminary report that does not shy away from justified criticism. ODIHR's methodology yet again proved up to the task.

Mr Chairman,

We reiterate our call on Russia and the separatists to engage constructively in the Trilateral Contact Group and its political working group to ensure that local elections will take place also in separatist controlled areas, as stipulated in the Minsk package. Such

elections must be in accordance with Ukrainian law and international standards, and be observed by ODIHR.

Thank you, Mr Chairman