



PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

OSCE Chairmanship Expert Seminar on
Electoral Management Bodies

Norwegian Closing Statement
As delivered by Second Secretary Frederik G. Ranke
Vienna, 17 July 2009

Madame Moderator,

Norway would like to thank the Greek Chairmanship for convening this Expert Seminar on Electoral Management Bodies. The discussions on the structure and composition of electoral management bodies, their role in ensuring the integrity of elections and their role in post-election activities have been interesting and useful, and will no doubt provide inputs and inspiration to perfection our various electoral systems.

We have also taken note of some comments regarding ODIHR's methodology for observing elections, which will be in focus in this statement.

As we have stated time and again, free and fair elections are the cornerstone of any democracy, and the commitment to organising such elections is arguably the most important commitment that the participating States have undertaken. Impartial and thorough international election observation is an important tool to ensure that commitments are being met, and is likewise a most valuable tool for participating states to identify shortcomings and remedy them for coming elections. The method developed in the OSCE, which covers the whole process, has by and large fulfilled its purpose and is held in high regard internationally. It has been constantly refined and improved, and must continue to be a living organism, capable of adaptation to face up to new challenges. We do not believe, however, that a new set of stringent rules that would severely limit ODIHR's activities compared to the established practice, and subject Election Observation Missions to decisions by the Permanent Council would serve to improve the excellent tool that our elections observation has developed into.

Madame Moderator,

Over the years, Norway has actively taken part in this organisation's debate on the modalities of election observation and we are happy to note that the vast majority of the participating States have full confidence in the ODIHR's professionalism, impartiality and expertise. Norway also believes that the effectiveness of OSCE institutions can only be guaranteed if

they retain their autonomy of action. Considering that the election-related commitments have been accepted by every participating State, everyone should work wholeheartedly with the ODIHR and support its efforts (and also to contribute to further improvements.)

Regrettably not all participating States share this view and unfortunately we still see elections in our region that fail to meet international standards. In a situation where adherence to accepted commitments is lacking, independent institutions like the ODIHR have a vital role to play in offering practical assistance to remedy shortcomings.

Finally, Moderator,

The inclusion of election monitors from various Parliamentary Assemblies is highly appreciated and we are encouraged by reports indicating that the cooperation between the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the ODIHR has been steadily improving during the latest Election Observation Missions.

Thank you Madame Moderator