



STATEMENT BY ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN, NORWAY AND
SWITZERLAND IN RESPONSE TO THE ELECTION PROCESS IN
BELARUS

OSCE Permanent Council, Vienna

23 March 2006

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. Our countries have closely followed the election process in Belarus, and we have at previous occasions expressed our concern about the undemocratic conduct of the election campaign.

We have carefully studied the preliminary report of International Election Observation mission and share the main conclusions of this report. We regret that the Presidential elections in Belarus failed to meet OSCE commitments for free, fair and democratic elections.

As the report points out, the pre-electoral environment did not represent a level playing field. The opposition and the civil society have during the campaign been subject to numerous intimidations. Opposition candidates were only granted limited access to the state-owned media. Furthermore the situation for the independent media was made difficult. On Election Day itself, we note with regret that the vote count was problematic and lacked transparency.

Our countries strongly deplore the statement from Belarusian KGB which associated the opposition and civil society groups with terrorism and which made direct accusations of the intent for a violent seizure of power. Norway expresses her appreciation for the peaceful manner in which the opposition has conducted demonstrations.

We condemn the arrest of opposition politicians and activists made on 21 March, and we strongly appeal to the Belarusian authorities to respect the democratic rights of her citizens in line with OSCE commitments, including the freedom of expression, association and assembly.

We furthermore appeal to the international community to strengthen the efforts to support the civil society and democratic forces in Belarus. It is important that the international community, including the OSCE, takes a common stand, and makes a common effort, to ensure a democratic development for the benefit of the citizens in Belarus. Indeed, we look forward to the day when Belarus, and its people, can take its place in a free, prosperous and democratic Europe.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.