



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE DIRECTOR OF ODIHR,
AMBASSADOR JANEZ LENARCIC

As delivered by Ambassador Guttorm Vik
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
29 October 2009

Madam Chairperson,

Let me first join previous speakers in warmly welcoming Ambassador Lenarčič back to the Permanent Council and thanking him for his informative report on the current situation for human rights, democracy and rule of law in the OSCE area. We notably appreciate his comprehensive report on the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, with which we fully concur. Let me also echo the words of support and appreciation expressed by Sweden on behalf of the EU for the general manner in which ODIHR discharges its important mandate, as well as the well-deserved congratulations for an Implementation Meeting very well prepared and conducted.

Madam Chairperson,

All the participating States are equally bound by our commitments to the principles of democracy and human rights, and while substantive progress has been achieved in our area, the work is far from completed. Regrettably, we also see some cases of backsliding in the implementation of freely undertaken commitments. ODIHR has a vital role to play in offering practical assistance, based on facts, to remedy shortcomings. That is why we believe it is so important to preserve ODIHR's autonomy and to strengthen its capabilities. The participating States must provide the resources necessary to make it possible for ODIHR to implement our recommendations and decisions in practice. This should particularly be kept in mind in our ongoing discussions on the 2010 Unified Budget. We agree that some of the seconded positions in ODIHR should be converted to contracted posts, thus contributing to ensure continuity and improve institutional memory.

Madam Chairperson,

Election observation was very appropriately given a very prominent place in Ambassador Lenarčič's introduction. Let me once again commend the ODIHR for its well-developed methodology of observing "before, during and after" the elections, which has earned the OSCE much of the international standing and confidence that our election observation currently enjoys. Accordingly, this methodology must remain at the core of all future election observation missions in the OSCE region. We do not believe that a new set of rules, which would limit ODIHR's activities and subject Election Observation Missions to decisions by the Permanent Council, would improve the excellent tool that our elections observation has been developed into.

The contributions of election monitors from various parliamentary assemblies is highly appreciated, and we were particularly gratified to learn that the cooperation between the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the ODIHR has functioned very well during the latest Election Observation Missions.

Madam Chairperson,

Norway applauds ODIHR for its continued focus on human rights defenders throughout our region. We need to protect human rights defenders like NGOs, lawyers and journalists. We must also uphold the principle that NGOs are indispensable contributors in our partnership-based peer review and continue to give them access to our meetings and conferences in line with established practice.

Finally, Madam Chairperson,

Norway looks forward to continuing our close cooperation with Ambassador Lenarčič and his dedicated and competent staff.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson