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

15 March 2012

**In response to the report by Mr. Janez Lenarčič,
Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights**

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Lenarčič,

We are grateful for the detailed and comprehensive report on the activities of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) over the past six months. We should like to take this opportunity to share some thoughts on the Office's work and possible ways of increasing its effectiveness.

First of all, a few comments regarding the ODIHR's election monitoring in the case of the presidential elections in our country, which were observed by more than 200 observers from the ODIHR mission.

The mission's conclusions are based on the preliminary findings on the elections, which were published on 5 March on behalf of the OSCE and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The Russian authorities have already stated that by and large the report appears to be balanced. However, a number of assessments are, in our view, of a biased nature. What is particularly regrettable is that the ODIHR observers focused their attention for the most part on identifying the negative aspects of the election campaign, without giving proper consideration to the serious efforts made in Russia to ensure that the elections were as transparent as possible.

In this connection, we cannot but emphasize the unique step taken by Russia of installing webcams in virtually all the polling stations, which recorded all aspects of the electoral process. The video footage is now in the hands of the Russian Central Election Commission, and anyone wishing to take a look at it may do so. It is therefore difficult to agree with the finding that the video monitoring did not live up to expectations.

The fact that the elections were monitored by an unprecedented number of Russian observers representing the main political parties and civil society associations was not given due consideration either.

The ODIHR observers' hypercritical attitude to minor procedural irregularities, such as the failure of the webcams to capture certain results protocols, is glaring. The significant finding that the electoral process deteriorated during the vote-count is based on this. Unfortunately, the ODIHR's conclusions focus solely on this finding taken out of context. This kind of approach is very different to the restrained attitude taken by ODIHR missions to the monitoring of elections in other countries, when ODIHR observers are not allowed anywhere near the polling stations.

We once again note that the ODIHR's findings differ dramatically not only to the conclusions drawn by the missions sent by the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation but also to the assessments of a group of independent international observers consisting of recognized election experts. This trend holds true not only with respect to Russia but also with regard to other CIS countries.

It is well known that there are serious problems concerning electoral laws and practice in many Western countries too. The existence of these problems is confirmed by the same ODIHR experts and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). We firmly believe that if the ODIHR monitoring missions were to evaluate the electoral processes in these countries in just as careful and critical a manner, their findings would be different.

If we are to ensure once and for all that assessments are objective and politically neutral, we need to conduct a comparative analysis of the implementation by all OSCE participating States of the Copenhagen Document in order to identify the most serious common problems with respect to elections and to determine ways of solving them. We need to begin solving this problem first and foremost by drawing up uniform standards and principles for election observation in all the countries of our Organization.

As for other aspects of the Office's work, the report presented testifies to continuing imbalances. The topics of ensuring freedom of movement and facilitating contacts between people as well as countering aggressive nationalism and the rise in neo-Nazi manifestations in the Organization's area of responsibility continue to be overlooked.

Instead we have heard in the report about the ODIHR's preparation of various brochures and textbooks, without any instructions being given for their preparation on the part of the collective bodies of the OSCE. We do not believe this is right and do not think that this has any consequences for the participating States.

As for the idea of overhauling the Advisory Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief, this requires additional consultations. We would be grateful to the Office if it would circulate among the delegations a detailed presentation of the plans and reasons why such a reform is necessary.

Let me turn to another subject. As Mr. Lenarčič rightly mentioned, not all of the provisions of the decisions taken by the decision-making bodies are being observed. This concerns not only time-frames but also the agreement of the agenda for work in the OSCE human dimension. In accordance with the Rules of Procedure, OSCE events may only be regarded as such if their agenda and theme are agreed upon with all the participating States. This provision was not observed with respect to the first Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting.

Improving the modalities for the holding of human dimension events is something that is long overdue. In their current form, these events are becoming increasingly unattractive. We trust that this year we shall begin work on increasing the effectiveness of human dimension events, regulating the participation of NGOs in them and reducing the duration of the Warsaw Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. The Organization's humanitarian agenda could be discussed within a much shorter time-frame. This will help us, in particular, to stretch our budget further.

Thank you for your attention.