



HDIM.IO/0262/11
30 September 2011

EUROPEAN UNION

Human Dimension Implementation Meeting Warsaw, 30 September 2011

EU Statement – Session 8: Democratic Elections and Electoral Observation

Ms/Mr Moderator

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union at this working session on “Democratic elections and electoral observation” of the 2011 OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting.

Democracy is a core value of the European Union and of the OSCE. At the OSCE summit in Astana last year, we, the participating States, recommitted at the level of Heads of State and governments to the vision of a “free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Euroasian security community.” Other commitments in the field of democracy and democratic institutions can be found in the 1990 Copenhagen document, the 1990 Charter of Paris and the 1999 Istanbul Charter for European Security. These commitments remain as valid today as they were at the time of their adoption.

The EU believes that no progress can be achieved towards effective democratic governance without the conduct of regular democratic elections. All participating States are responsible in fulfilling election-related commitments. It is crucial that the principles of free and fair elections, freedom of expression

and media including on the Internet, and freedom of association and assembly are respected everywhere in the OSCE region.

We are concerned that limitations to conduct democratic elections remain in some participating States. In this regard, we are referring to inter alia limitations regarding the right to be elected, lack of freedom in election campaigns, limits on access to and coverage by the media, tabulation of votes, voter registration, election administration and inefficient appeal processes. The EU strongly urges all participating States to conduct free and fair elections in line with their OSCE commitments.

We would like to express our appreciation of the Office for Democratic institutions and Human rights (ODIHR) in assisting all participating States, including Member States of the EU, to conduct elections in compliance with OSCE commitments and international standards for democratic elections. The EU reiterates its determination to fully co-operate with the ODIHR and to continue to support its work to strengthen democratic institutions and processes in the OSCE region. The EU calls upon all participating States to invite ODIHR to issue timely invitations to observe their elections in accordance with their commitments and without restrictions and without limitations imposed in the number of domestic and international observers.

The OSCE/ODIHR is a leading actor in election observation. The observations are in accordance with the standard methodology which has been developed over many years. The methodology is fully transparent due to the regular publication of updated editions of the Election Observation Handbook. The EU wishes to express its support to the election observation methodology based on strict adherence to principles of independence, impartiality and professionalism. It is imperative that the mandate of ODIHR is retained. The EU would not agree to any action which would undermine ODIHR's autonomous position in election

observation. The European Union also wishes to recall the United Nations resolution A/RES/64/155 on strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization, in which the UN General Assembly reaffirmed that the electoral assistance provided by the United Nations should continue to be carried out in an objective, impartial, neutral and independent manner. It further expressed appreciation for the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the Code of Conduct for International Observers.

Full implementation of ODIHR's election observation recommendations should be a priority for all participating States. The overall objective is to identify shortcomings and implementation gaps of our commitments and to remedy them through follow up measures. The EU believes that in support of the OSCE commitments, it is useful to share experiences on the follow up of ODIHR's recommendations and we commend the countries that have presented their follow up efforts in relation to the election observation recommendations.

The EU believes that close co-operation between ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in the field of election observation is essential. The EU also welcomes further co-operation regarding election observation between ODIHR and the other international bodies such as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the European Parliament, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe.

The EU wishes to thank ODIHR for publishing the political party guidelines as well as the updated freedom of assembly guidelines.

In this regard, the EU would also like to thank the Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship for organising the Expert seminar on the Role of Political Parties in

the Political Process in Warsaw on 18-20 May. It provided a good opportunity for representatives of the participating States, experts, and civil society actors to review the unique role of political parties in democratic political processes.

Finally, democratic values, human rights and rule of law are the fundament on which the OSCE can and should be built upon. According to the Moscow declaration from 1991, reconfirmed at the level of Heads of States and governments in Astana last year, “commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States”. Democracy and regular democratic elections in one OSCE participating State is a direct and legitimate concern to all participating States. The European Union strongly attaches itself to this principle and stands ready to work with participating States and ODIHR to foster democratic elections, election observation and to build, protect, defend and strengthen democracy in the whole OSCE area from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

Thank you for your kind attention.

The candidate countries TURKEY, CROATIA*, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ICELAND**, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA and SERBIA, the European Free Trade Association countries LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

*Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

**Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and the European Economic Area.