



se2009.eu

Swedish Presidency of the European Union

OSCE Chairmanship Expert Seminar on Electoral Management Bodies
Vienna 17 July 2009

EU Closing Statement

Madam Moderator, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The European Union would like to thank the Greek OSCE Chairmanship for organizing this Expert Seminar on Electoral Management Bodies. We believe it has provided a useful opportunity to discuss topics related to Electoral Management Bodies and our common OSCE commitments.

During the course of the Seminar we have touched on a broad range of issues including the structure and composition of Electoral Management Bodies, the integrity of elections as well as follow-up and implementation of election related commitments. Our discussions have been enriched by the qualitative participation of experts that work in the field and by representatives of civil society.

It is clear that when it comes to Electoral Management Bodies, there are a variety of structures and functions in the OSCE region and also in EU Member States. Nevertheless, it is also clear that,

Postal address
Obere Donaustrasse 49-51
1020 Vienna, Austria

Telephone
+43 (0) 1 217 53 0

E-mail: osse-del.wien@foreign.ministry.se
euoffice@osce.org

Visitor's address
Obere Donaustrasse 49-51
1020 Vienna, Austria

Fax
+43 (0) 1 217 53 380

through the commitments adopted by our governments, the Electoral Management Bodies are bound to function within a framework that includes transparency, credibility, independence and accountability.

Madam Moderator,

The European Union has listened with interest to the topics raised during this Expert Seminar and would like to make some comments and draw some conclusions:

- On the primacy of democracy: the OSCE *acquis* related to democracy and democratic elections form an integral part of our organisation. Our jointly adopted commitments - including through the Charter of Paris for a New Europe and the Copenhagen document - affirm the primacy of democracy, which has as its basis the will of the people expressed regularly through free and fair elections, as the only system of government of our nations.

- On the need for implementation: whereas we, the participating States of the OSCE, have adopted a wide range of impressive election related commitments, the main challenge remains their implementation throughout the OSCE region, which means providing for genuine political competition before and during elections.

- On the role of the ODIHR: in order to ensure and to facilitate our responsibility to implement our commitments we, the participating States, have the expertise and assistance of the ODIHR at our

disposal. Let us use its excellent knowledge and advice in accordance with our commitments to do so. The European Union reiterates its determination to continue to fully co-operate with the ODIHR. Moreover, in order for the ODIHR to continue providing us with its expertise and assistance we believe it is essential that it retains its impartial mandate.

- On our commitments on democratic elections: a crucial component of our commitments, on which ODIHR's election observation standards are based, is the premise that an election is much more than a one-day event. It is the long term and impartial assessment of the whole election process, including how participating States can follow-up recommendations in order to meet their commitments, which makes the ODIHR's work unique. The quality the European Union associates with the ODIHR and its professional election observation methodology is exemplified by the fact that it has served as a model for our own election observation missions. The EU would also like to note the value it attaches to the important role and experience of the Parliamentary Assembly.

- On the recently held elections to the European Parliament, as you know the European Parliament is a unique supra-national parliament with the largest trans-national electorate in the world. Elections to it are conducted in accordance with the national legislation of each Member State albeit following some common European rules. Preceding the elections Members States of the European Union invited inter alia the ODIHR to observe them in accordance with our OSCE commitments. Given the size and distinct character of the elections, the ODIHR chose an exceptional format to assess the elections with a specific focus on pan-European issues. We were very pleased to cooperate with the

ODIHR and look forward to its forthcoming expert report on the elections to the European Parliament.

Finally, I would like to reiterate our appreciation for this valuable Expert Seminar on Electoral Management Bodies. We believe it has highlighted topics and principles of great importance in our joint endeavour to ensure the vitality of democracy.

Thank you.