

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. VLADIMIR ZHEGLOV,
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1143rd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

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**On the monitoring activities of the
OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights**

Mr. Chairperson,

We should like to say a few words about the position of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) on ensuring monitoring of electoral processes in the OSCE area. As you know, within the framework of its mandate, the Office (in accordance with Decision No. 19/06, adopted at the Ministerial Council Meeting in Brussels in 2006) should ensure as wide as possible geographical coverage in its election activities. Alas, this does not happen in practice. And, as we see, the ODIHR's work is by no means always based on the principles of independence, impartiality and professionalism, as is required of it.

So, the Office's refusal to send a full-scale observation mission for the first round of the presidential elections in France on 23 April, as well as the ODIHR's conclusion that it is inexpedient to monitor the upcoming parliamentary elections in that country, scheduled for 11 June, is puzzling.

We carefully examined the report of the needs assessment mission, which was distributed on 12 April – with a considerable delay, actually on the eve of the elections. The report contains conclusions on the basis of which the Office decided to send only three experts to such important elections in one of the largest countries of Europe. We believe that these conclusions do not stand up to scrutiny.

As you know, the campaign trail in France took place against the background of an unfavorable political situation. It was characterized by the use of administrative resources by the authorities, the dissemination in the media of compromising material on the presidential candidates, and unreasonable accusations against Russia, which allegedly interfered with the election campaign through hacking.

The ODIHR's decision goes against the assertion actively promoted by the Office's Director, Mr. Michael Georg Link, that full-scale monitoring of election campaigns should be carried out in all key OSCE participating States.

Here are a few recent examples. At last year's elections of deputies to the State Duma of the Russian Federation, 471 observers worked as part of the ODIHR's international monitoring mission, compared to 285 at the general elections in the United States of America in November 2016, and 354 observers at the recent parliamentary elections in Armenia (2 April). Against this background, the involvement of only three experts in monitoring in France, where there will also be a second round of voting, looks clearly unfair.

We are convinced that by adopting such a decision the Office is once again discrediting its activities on the electoral track, using "double standards" and subjectively dividing the participating States into "mature and immature democracies". There is an obvious geographical imbalance: the Office sends hundreds of observers as part of full-scale missions to the States "east of Vienna", with rare exceptions, while many electoral processes in Western countries are unjustifiably overlooked by the ODIHR.

In our opinion, the reason for these problems lies in the absence in the OSCE of a collectively agreed methodology for election observation. We recall that in 2007, a whole group of countries, including Russia, proposed that a common denominator should be achieved on the basis of the draft Basic Principles for the Organization of OSCE/ODIHR Observation of National Elections. But, despite the proposed solutions, no consensus has been reached so far.

We call on the Office's leadership to reconsider its unilateral approach and ensure equal treatment of all participating States.

Thank you for your attention.