



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2012
Warsaw, 3 October 2012**

EU statement – Session 15

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS / DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS

Madam Moderator,

I am taking the floor on behalf of the European Union. The OSCE Participating States have agreed through their human dimension commitments that pluralistic democracy based on the rule of law is the only system of government suitable to guarantee human rights effectively. The EU is of the firm belief that the conduct of democratic elections is key for sustainable progress towards effective democratic governance.

Electoral observation is the main OSCE instrument to assist participating states to conduct democratic elections and remains a flagship activity of this organisation. The CSCE/OSCE has acknowledged this correlation by founding, more than 20 years ago, the Office for Free Elections, which was transformed into the ODIHR in 1992. The EU greatly values ODIHR's expertise in the assessment of democratic elections. We believe that on the basis of ODIHR's comprehensive and precise methodology which sets a benchmark in the context of respective international standards there can be no doubt that ODIHR is capable to fulfil its mandate as electoral observer in an impartial and effective fashion.

The EU also believes that close cooperation between the ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in the field of election observation is essential. In this field, an efficient and trustful working relationship between the ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, based on the 1997 Co-operation Agreement, is in the interest of all and remains key to our common success.

The democratic process is a living process where improvements, in new as well as in old democracies, are always possible and necessary. In this regard, the recommendations by the ODIHR, especially those based on comprehensive election monitoring, are of great value. The EU urges all participating states to continue to invite the ODIHR to observe their elections in accordance with their commitments and without restrictions.

In order to improve the implementation of recommendations resulting from election observation the EU strongly supports a concrete and dynamic follow-up at the political level of the OSCE, first and foremost by informed and timely in-depth debates of related issues in the Permanent Council. The EU calls upon all participating states to accept their ownership for this process and to actively report on follow-up measures to be adopted in reaction to ODIHR's recommendations.

In this context, we positively note as an example the debates on the follow-up of presidential elections in Russia, which took place in the Permanent Council of 8 March 2012 as well as in the framework of the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting of 12 and 13 July 2012. We recall the parliamentary elections in Belarus of 23 September 2012 and draw attention to the 24 September statement of preliminary

findings of the OSCE/ODIHR observation mission, which indicated that competition was limited and many democratic rights were not respected. We also draw attention to the statement of preliminary findings of the OSCE/ODIHR observation mission in Georgia, which indicated that the country has taken an important step in consolidating the conduct of democratic elections noting, at the same time, that some key issues remain. The EU is also looking forward to a timely debate of respective election observation assessments of the forthcoming presidential elections in the United States of America.

Election observation is also an essential part of the EU's own activities to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The EU has assisted ODIHR with electoral assistance projects and various instruments for financial and technical co-operation. In this context, the EU and its Member States are also supportive of election related measures extended by the ODIHR to OSCE Mediterranean Partners upon their request.

The European Union reiterates its determination to continue to fully cooperate with the ODIHR and to support its broader range of efforts with regard to strengthening democratic institutions and processes.

Thank you, Madam Moderator.

The Acceding Country Croatia*, the Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Iceland+ and Serbia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

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

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