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EUROPEAN UNION

**Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Warsaw, 30 September 2011**

EU Statement – Session 9: Democratic elections and electoral observation

Ms/Mr Moderator

I am honoured to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The EU is of the firm belief that the conduct of democratic elections is key for sustainable progress towards effective democratic governance.

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 and entrusted with additional tasks especially related to democratic institution-building.

Today, with the experience of two decades of successful work behind, the OSCE/ODIHR is recognised as an indispensable leading actor in the field of strengthening processes of democratic elections and assisting participating States to conduct elections in compliance with OSCE commitments and international standards.

Electoral observation is the main OSCE instrument to assist participating states to conduct democratic elections and remains a flagship activity of this organisation. The EU greatly values ODIHR's expertise in the assessment of

democratic elections. In this context, we draw attention to the 6th revised edition of the ODIHR Election Observation Handbook published in 2010. 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 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 the perspective of forthcoming elections, we especially expect Russia to set the right example.

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 debate which took place in the Permanent Council of 7 April 2011 on the follow-up of presidential elections in Kazakhstan. We also recall the presidential elections of 19 December 2010 in Belarus and draw attention to the active role of the ODIHR in assessing shortcomings of the electoral process, as well as to the ongoing debate in the Permanent Council on events in Belarus in the aftermath of these elections. Other election-related missions conducted by the ODIHR, for example the pilot project on new voting technologies on the occasion of municipal elections in Norway on 12 September 2011 or possible election related support

measures to be granted to OSCE Mediterranean Partners upon their request, also deserve our special attention.

Election observation is an essential part of the EU 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.

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

The EU reiterates its view that democracy is not restricted only to democratic elections. 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 European Union reiterates its determination to continue to fully co-operate with the ODIHR and to support its broader range of efforts with regard to strengthening democratic institutions and processes.

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 country LIECHTENSTEIN, member 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.