

**Statement by Switzerland on behalf of the Delegations  
of CANADA, ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN, NORWAY and SWITZERLAND  
(Group of the Like-Minded)**

**at the 831<sup>ST</sup> Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council**

**12 October 2010**

**Joint Statement on Election Observations**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman

On 17 September, the Parliamentary Assembly's Representative in Vienna, distinguished Ambassador Andreas Nothelle, wrote a letter to several Heads of Delegation, addressing a long-standing point of contention between the Parliamentary Assembly (PA) and the Office on Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) on their joint Election Observation Missions and insisting on ODIHR's "full compliance" with the Co-operation Agreement of 1997. The five partners of the "Group of Like-Minded" – Canada, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland – while fully sharing the letter's intention to "avoid further harm to election observation", would like to state the following observations:

1) Observation and support of democratic *Elections* are a core business of the OSCE and of common concern to its PA as well as to the ODIHR. This main institution for the Human dimension of Security was initially called the "Office for Free Elections". Both were created by the Paris Summit 1990, but work on the basis of their specific mandate, competence and experience. A certain co-operation and division of labour among them is obvious, logical and inevitable.

2) The "*Co-operation Agreement between the OSCE/PA and the OSCE/ODIHR*" (CA'97) was signed on the governmental side by the CiO in 1997, not by the Director of ODIHR – both executive structures of the OSCE and installed periodically by consensus. But the basic spirit of this Agreement is certainly – as already expressed by its title – that of *co-operation among equal partners*. And in our understanding co-operation involves *co-ordination*, not any subordination or hierarchy of the PA over the ODIHR.

Mr. Chairman

3) In the context of current OSCE election observations (EOs), the PA Secretariat is criticizing ODIHR's press releases for not mentioning the PA Special Co-ordinator as appointed by the CiO and his prerogatives according to the letter of the CA'97. We are convinced that, if there is a need for corrections, also the PA for its part should refrain from claiming on its website the

“Election Observation *leadership*” and give due credit to the indispensable contributions of ODIHR.

4) Whereas, for the election day, the PA co-ordinator leads the short-term observers – seconded by participating States or sent by OSCE’s and other parliamentary assemblies –, ODIHR is present in the observed country already *weeks before the election* with its *core team and long-term observers*. This *prominence of information* should not only be adequately shared with the parliamentary observers. It would also justify that, on the after-election day, a joint statement or at least harmonized ones be delivered by the STO co-ordinator of the PA as well as the head of the ODIHR mission on *equal footing*.

5) Finally, let me stress once more the importance of maintaining the high credibility enjoyed by OSCE election observation missions, for which we are particularly indebted to the thorough methodology developed by ODIHR, and consisting in observing before, during and after elections. As we have seen on numerous occasions, election observation missions are at their best when based on a truly cooperative partnership between the participating institutions benefiting entirely from their respecting strengths. We fully understand the respective roles of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. It is our hope that turf and conflicts of personality can be overcome to ensure that the credibility of the OSCE is not affected. It is in our common interest and we strongly believe in it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman