



OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 23 September to 4 October 2013

Working Sessions 12 & 13 (specifically selected topic): Democratic elections and election observation - sharing best practices

Warsaw, 1 October 2013

Statement by the Delegation of Switzerland

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson,
Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, colleagues,

- As you are aware, Switzerland has a long tradition of strong popular control over its institutions through democracy and elections. Citizens have experienced the benefits of this system and Switzerland recognizes that this paved the way for its stability. At the same time, new challenges have emerged for older democracies such as Switzerland, which require continuously staying alert and remaining open for improvements.
- As a Participating State of the OSCE, Switzerland considers that a strong commitment for the conduct of inclusive, transparent and credible elections is essential not only for the implementation of political

and civil rights in each country but also to contribute to peace and security in the OSCE region.

- This is why, Mr Chairperson, Switzerland is concerned about the different views of the participating States that may not be conducive to effective promotion of democratic elections. As we all know, elections are politically very sensitive issues touching upon the sovereignty of each state. Nonetheless we have realized that we have to make an effort to find common ground. We are confident that if there is political will and the readiness to take each other's concerns seriously, we can continue and even improve implementing our respective commitments in that regard.
 - In an effort to build bridges, we have, for instance, contributed financially to the first phase of the project on "Review of Electoral Legislation and Practice of OSCE Participating States". We are looking forward to reading the first conclusions of the project.
 - Today's HDIM Special Day on sharing best practices on democratic elections and election observation is also a welcome opportunity given that there is no "one size fits all" political and electoral system. Switzerland stands ready to discuss electoral legislations and practices as long as it does not contradict existing international and OSCE commitments to democratic elections.
 - ODIHR's election observation is of great assistance to participating States in their efforts to comply with these commitments. ODIHR has had - and still has - a very busy year 2013 with up to at least 17 election observation activities. We would like to praise ODIHR for its capacity to efficiently establish observation missions, providing professional briefings and ensuring a safe and logistically sound deployment of electoral observers. We therefore would like to take this op-
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portunity to express our appreciation to the ODIHR election staff for its professionalism, dedication and remarkable work. For sustaining the professional and effective conduct of observation missions at all levels, Switzerland has also committed itself for the years to come to provide additional funding to the ODIHR Election Observers Training Programme.

- We are convinced of the high value of ODIHR recommendations on the conduct of elections, which must be given full and serious consideration. Therefore, Switzerland welcomes the positive trend towards intensified follow-up of these recommendations and the increasing engagement of participating States in cooperating with follow-up visits and reporting to the Human Dimension Committee. Switzerland is ready to make experts and resources available to that end. It also considers that a closer work with electoral assistance organizations would be beneficial in countries which have requested this support.
 - Switzerland, too, is ready to undergo a comprehensive follow-up process. Currently, the recommendations of the last Election Assessment Mission in Switzerland are being processed within our national administration. We will be in touch with the ODIHR on that matter in the upcoming months.
 - Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.
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