

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1182nd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

19 April 2018

**On the electoral methodology of the OSCE Office for Democratic
Institutions and Human Rights**

Mr. Chairperson,

Once again we are forced to raise the issue of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights' (ODIHR) election observation activity in the OSCE area. In this sphere of the ODIHR's work, there remains a significant imbalance in terms of the geographical deployment and the size of observation missions.

In 2017 alone, the ODIHR sent close to 25 times more observers to States "east of Vienna" than to States "west of Vienna". These figures reflect a general pattern of bias in the ODIHR's approach. Over the past five years, out of 36 full-scale election observation missions, States "west of Vienna" accounted for only two – the United States of America in 2016 and Bulgaria in 2013.

The ODIHR routinely ignores elections in Western countries, preferring to send small-scale missions there. For example, in 2017 it sent only groups of three experts to elections in France, the United Kingdom, Germany and Norway. We note that the ODIHR traditionally motivates such decisions by referring to the views of national stakeholders, the selection of which often fails to take into account the principle of political pluralism (in some cases the ODIHR has contact exclusively with opposition members, who are obviously critical of government policies, and in other cases the ODIHR meets with representatives of State structures and non-governmental organizations). In many cases the ODIHR does not observe elections at all. We calculate that from 2013 to 2017 the ODIHR did not observe 19 elections in States "west of Vienna".

Repeated demands to improve the ODIHR's electoral monitoring methodology and draft agreed principles and rules for election observation have remained unanswered. But it is high time to rectify this situation. We see a clear lack of political will and we see the desire by some States to use the ODIHR as a foreign policy tool. Let us give a concrete example for the current year. Our distinguished Swedish colleagues announced at the last meeting of the Permanent Council that Sweden would hold a general election on 9 September.

We recall that in 2010 and 2014 Sweden avoided international monitoring of its elections, although they were by no means without flaw. Serious democratic and organizational violations came to light. There were cases of ballot papers disappearing or being moved from one place to another, as well as open manifestations of extremism. There were issues too concerning secret ballot and Swedish political parties' financing sources.

Experts think that the situation as regards respect for democratic norms has deteriorated in Sweden since the last general election in 2014. The Swedish Government receives serious criticism on a regular basis from the relevant international bodies based on their monitoring of the human rights situation in the country.

We hope that the ODIHR's work to observe the election in Sweden will become a kind of test for the objectivity of its assessments and an equal approach on its part towards States "east" and "west" of Vienna, including with regard to deciding the format and size of observation missions.

Thank you for your attention.