



Vienna, 20 April, 2018

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Statement by H.E. Ulrika Funered, Ambassador of Sweden to the OSCE, at the 1182nd meeting of the Permanent Council on 19 April 2018 in response to the Current Issue raised by the Russian Federation on “ODIHR electoral methodology”

Sweden aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union. In addition, I would like to make some comments in my national capacity as my country was mentioned by the Russian Delegation.

As a response to the statement of the Russian delegation, I would first of all like to take this opportunity to underline the value Sweden puts on the practice of exchanging information about concerns regarding our election related OSCE commitments. Sweden is a firm friend of the OSCE commitments and we are striving hard to make sure that all OSCE participating states, including ourselves, abide by the OSCE acquis.

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Sweden has full confidence in ODIHR and its long-standing and well-established election observation methodology, which is globally recognized. It is applied in the same unbiased manner in all participating States, always based on thorough needs assessments. This is not a question of striking some kind of artificial balance between the so called east of Vienna and the so called west of Vienna, but about applying the election observation methodology, which is based on the principles of independence, impartiality and professionalism, in an unbiased manner. Again, we have full confidence in ODIHR in this regard. As per my statement in this Council last week and the note verbale circulated, Sweden invites ODIHR, OSCE PA and all participating states to observe the Swedish general elections. We welcome and applaud the advice and support ODIHR provides to all of us as participating States.

For Sweden, the functioning of the election system is of the greatest importance. The voters' confidence in the system, the possibility for the voters to make informed choices and a high and equal voter participation are all fundamental for the legitimacy of our democratic system. Therefore, we are happy to see that the Swedish election system enjoys a high degree of confidence among the Swedish citizens.

The Russian delegation has questioned the invitation of international observers during the previous Swedish elections. In the Swedish system, there is no restriction for either

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international visitors, organisations, private persons or individual countries to observe the election process. Since the voting and counting processes are open to the public, no special permission or accreditation is needed. Anyone may therefore observe voting and counting, as long as the observation does not intervene with the process.

In addition, in accordance with our OSCE commitments, we also invite international observers. Before the elections in 2010, Sweden invited ODIHR, OSCE PA and all OSCE participating states, in line with our commitments.

OSCE/ODHIR's Need Assessment Mission noted in their report, ahead of the 2010 elections in Sweden, that there was a profound confidence of political parties in the integrity of the electoral process and in the professionalism and impartiality of the election administration. No significant concerns were expressed related to the functioning of democratic institutions, the respect for fundamental freedoms, the transparency of the electoral process, candidate registration, the campaign environment, media access and election day proceedings. Hence, and despite the fact that Sweden at that time lacked binding rules on transparency regarding party financing, the Mission did not recommend election-related activities.

In the elections in 2014, Sweden issued an invitation to participating states, ODIHR, OSCE PA and other appropriate

institutions and organizations both in writing, and orally, here in this room, at the Permanent Council on 10 April 2014. It is true that a group of international observers noted the issue on how ballot papers are distributed in the polling stations and in other public places. However, at the same time, the observers noted that this was not a serious criticism on the legitimacy of the election itself.

As noted earlier, Sweden takes legitimate criticism on our election system seriously and we are striving to improve our methods. That is why some reforms have been implemented in 2015. For example, Sweden has increased security aspects for handling the material in the polling stations and a new training for election officials was introduced. This is believed to strengthen the resilience of our system.

To increase the openness in our democratic system, Sweden has also in 2014 introduced a new law regarding party financing. The new legislation was extended on 1 April 2018 so that the political parties and individual politicians are, on all political levels, requested to declare their income sources. There is also a ban against anonymous financial contributions.

As I previously mentioned: the voters' confidence in the system, the possibility for the voters to make informed choices and a high and equal voter participation are all fundamental for the legitimacy of our democratic system. The Swedish election

system has for many years proved to enjoy this confidence of the Swedish citizens. It has proved to be resilient against different forms of inappropriate attempts of influence.

But lately, we have seen new threats toward the system, and toward the right of our voters to make their own well-informed choices. Swedish authorities are noticing an increasing number of attempts to spread disinformation. Amongst other, disinformation about our election system and our vote counting procedures. This is also what we have seen in other countries' elections during the last years. We take this threat of influence against our democratic system seriously.

I would like to have this statement attached to the journal of the day.

Thank you, Chair.