



## SUPPLEMENTARY HUMAN DIMENSION MEETING

### “CHALLENGES OF ELECTION TECHNOLOGIES AND PROCEDURES”

21-22 April 2005  
HOFBURG, VIENNA

#### ANNOTATED AGENDA

##### OVERVIEW

The 1990 Copenhagen Document presents a wide-ranging set of commitments agreed upon by the OSCE participating States for fostering the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms and the promotion of strong democratic institutions and rule of law. It includes commitments by participating States for the conduct of democratic elections throughout the OSCE region. In the 1990 Charter of Paris, the participating States committed to “undertake to build, consolidate and strengthen democracy as the only system of government of our nations,” recognizing that “democratic government is based on the will of the people, expressed regularly through free and fair elections.”

The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is the main OSCE institution for the human dimension. A key element of the ODIHR’s human dimension mandate is the promotion of democratic elections i.e., elections that are universal, accountable, transparent, secret, free, fair, and equal, and which respect fundamental human rights.

Election observation continues to identify a number of ongoing and emerging challenges, including those related to election technologies and procedures, with regard to implementation of OSCE election-related commitments and other international standards. The OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting entitled “Challenges of Election Technologies and Procedures” will focus on the following three areas:

- An overview of **new election technologies**, such as electronic voting, as well as some comparison of the main systems in use. New technologies can pose challenges to the perceived transparency and accountability of an

election process, and can impact *inter alia* on overall confidence in the process.

- Ongoing challenges to **implementation** of existing OSCE commitments for democratic elections. An examination of the issues, particularly concerning: fostering public confidence as an essential element of organizing genuine democratic elections; realizing universal and equal suffrage by removing discrimination and encouraging the participation of women, inclusion of national minorities, and access for disabled persons; and establishing accountability for electoral actors through equal treatment before the law and by the authorities and the redress of violations, and ensuring transparency through the whole electoral process.
- **Election observation:** Challenges to enhancing electoral integrity. Through the Copenhagen Document, OSCE participating States consider the presence of observers, both foreign and domestic, to enhance the electoral process, and they commit to invite observers from other participating States and appropriate private institutions and organizations. In order to ensure the transparency of all electoral processes, the election system should explicitly provide for the role of observers in all election operations. Election observers can offer recommendations with a view to improve the process, and thus can enhance overall confidence. However, as stated in the Copenhagen Document, observers undertake not to interfere in electoral proceedings.

## **SESSIONS**

### **Session I: New Election Technologies: Emerging Challenges for Electoral Processes**

New election technologies, such as electronic voting capacity in polling stations or remote electronic voting, have the potential to facilitate voter participation. However, new technologies may pose challenges to the perception of transparency and accountability of an election process. This session will give a brief introduction and overview to electronic voting, as well as some comparison of the main systems in use (touchscreen vs. optical scanning systems, networked vs. non-networked systems, voter-verifiable audit trail vs. non-verifiable systems, internet voting/phone voting, other methods of automated voting).

Topics for discussion will include:

- An overview of new and existing election technologies;
- Challenges and benefits of new technologies, and potential impact on voter confidence;

- Criteria electoral authorities use when choosing electronic voting technologies;
- Manner of introduction, including voter education, pilot testing and independent domestic verification;
- Challenges to observing electronic voting.

## **Session II: OSCE Election Commitments: Ongoing Challenges to Implementation - Copenhagen Plus as a Possible Means to Enhance Compliance**

OSCE/ODIHR election observation continues to identify a number of ongoing and emerging challenges to the implementation of OSCE election-related commitments. Ongoing challenges include decreasing voter turnout, the participation of women, the inclusion of national minorities, access for disabled voters, and challenges for other categories of voters (i.e. internally displaced persons, military voting, hospital voting, prison voting) in the election process.

In addition, adverse trends for the implementation of commitments continue to be in evidence, including: unjustified attempts to limit competition of parties and candidates; refusal of registration and/or de-registration of candidates; misuse of state administrative resources; media bias; election administration that lacks public confidence and is not sufficiently inclusive, lack of clear voter registration guidelines and safeguards to prevent abuse; lack of sufficient transparency and accountability during the vote count, the tabulation of the vote and the announcement of results; complaints and appeals procedures that do not always permit a timely and effective redress of complaints; and a lack of sufficient will to rectify identified shortcomings.

Topics for discussion will include:

- A discussion on how participating States, collectively and individually, may address the above issues, including through enhanced follow-up mechanisms and additional commitments;
- Ensuring participation of women, minorities, disabled persons; internally displaced persons, and other specific categories in the electoral process.
- Follow-up to recommendations contained in OSCE/ODIHR reports, in accordance with the Istanbul Summit Declaration;
- The role that civil society may play in promoting the implementation of such recommendations; and

- Elaboration of the concept of a “Copenhagen Plus”, which was discussed during the July 2004 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting, as a possible means to further enhance compliance with commitments.

### **Session III: Election Observation: Challenges to Enhancing Electoral Integrity**

OSCE participating States are committed to democracy and to holding democratic elections. In the 1990 Copenhagen Document, participating States agreed that the presence of observers, both foreign and domestic, can enhance the electoral process. Since 1996, the OSCE/ODIHR has followed a comprehensive observation methodology that is objective, transparent and accountable, and addresses developments before, during and after election day. Other international governmental and non-governmental organizations, including the European Union, have embraced the OSCE/ODIHR methodology and adopted similar approaches. In recent years, the Commonwealth of Independent States has also become active in the field of election observation. Domestic observation also contributes significantly to transparency, and hence confidence in electoral processes.

Topics for discussion will include:

- The role of international and domestic election observers (in particular domestic non-partisan observers), for enhancing the integrity of election processes in line with OSCE Copenhagen Commitments;
- Comprehensive election observation methodologies, both international and domestic, used to assess all elements of an election process – before, during and after election day;
- The interaction between international and domestic observers;
- Facilitating election observation in order to increase voter confidence.