



**PERMANENT DELEGATION  
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

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ENGLISH only

**STATEMENT IN RESPONSE ON the OSCE/ODIHR Election  
Observation Mission to the Russian Duma elections**

As delivered by Ambassador Guttorm Vik  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
22 November 2007

Norway strongly supports ODIHR's election observation activities. Free and fair elections, with full legitimacy at both national and international level, are a cornerstone in any democratic system, and international election observation is an important contribution towards reaching that goal throughout the OSCE area.

ODIHR's main contribution to international election observation has been to develop a methodology for election observation covering not only the actual conduct of the elections on election day, but also the electoral campaign and the entire election process. This methodology is held in generally high regard internationally for its thoroughness, comprehensiveness and objectivity, and is often referred to as the "gold standard" in international election observation.

It was a matter of great concern and disappointment to us when the invitation to ODIHR to observe the imminent Duma elections in Russia came so late and contained such unprecedented restrictions that it would not be possible for ODIHR to conduct a full-fledged election observation according to its own, established standards.

It was a further great disappointment when we recently learned that practical obstacles made ODIHR conclude that it could not conduct even the shorter-term, more limited election observation that had been planned.

Norway encourages all participating states to allow ODIHR to carry out election observations according to ODIHR's own standards and procedures, to the benefit of all peoples in the OSCE area.