



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

STATEMENT ON UPCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN UKRAINE

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile
to the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 22 May 2014

Mr Chairman,

The Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs, together with his Danish and Estonian colleagues, will the coming weekend visit Ukraine. They will meet acting Prime Minister Yatsenyuk and Foreign Minister Deshchytsia, presidential candidates, as well as representatives from the Council of Europe, the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission and ODIHR Election Observation Mission. The aim of the visit is to show support for the presidential elections on Sunday.

Mr Chairman,

Successful elections are vital for Ukraine's ability to implement necessary democratic reforms, including constitutional reforms, and to begin the process of reconciliation and stabilization. We encourage all Ukrainians as well as the international community to support the Sunday elections.

Ukraine is now hosting one of the biggest ever election observation missions. In addition to the more than 1000 observers under the leadership of ODIHR, these elections will be observed by many more, by parliamentarians, by civil society representatives and by observers provided on a bilateral basis. The many observers represent a strong message of support to Ukraine in a difficult period of the country's history. We are confident that they will contribute to securing a free and fair election process and thereby a good basis for the hard work that will follow after the elections.

Electing a new president is not the end of a process but the beginning, the beginning of developing a unified and democratic Ukraine.

I would like to highlight two issues in this regard.

First, comprehensive reports produced by the UN and by our own institutions confirm that the human rights situation in Ukraine has gone from bad to worse during the past few months. We note that pro-Maidan activists, journalists and Crimean Tatars are among the primary victims of the many recent violations of human rights.

Improving the human rights situation must be a priority, for Ukraine, but also for the international community eager to assist Ukraine. Human rights must however not be seen isolated from issues concerning good governance and the fight against corruption. They are linked and they are all necessary for the development of a free and democratic society.

We are committed to provide long-term support to Ukraine. As I mentioned in my statement on Ukraine last week, my Government has asked Parliament as a first step to increase budgetary allocations to Ukraine considerably, to 18.5 million euros in 2014. Democratization, good governance and civil society will be one of our main priorities. We see the OSCE as an obvious partner in this work, and will channel a considerable proportion of our increased support through our Framework Agreement with the organization.

Mr Chairman,

My second point concerns the national dialogues initiated by the Ukrainian government with support of the OSCE. We welcome them and believe they will be an important element in the process towards constitutional reforms, de-escalation and of reconciliation. We commend the inclusive approach adopted by the transitional authorities. We understand, however, the difficult considerations that will have to be made in this regard.

The national dialogues must of course be owned and led by the Ukrainians themselves. But also in this area Ukraine should not be in doubt that they can rely on the support from their friends.

Thank you, Mr Chairman