

The OSCE Secretariat bears no responsibility for the content of this document and circulates it without altering its content. The distribution by OSCE Conference Services of this document is without prejudice to OSCE decisions, as set out in documents agreed by OSCE participating States.

PC.DEL/76/24
2 February 2024

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1459th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

1 February 2024

On the reasons for the absence of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights from international observation of the Russian Federation presidential election in 2024

Madam Chairperson,

On 29 January, a representative of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) announced that the Organization would not be taking part in the international observation of the presidential election in the Russian Federation from 15 to 17 March 2024, citing the lack of an invitation from Russia.

The forthcoming expression of the will of citizens in Russia will be most transparent. At the invitation of Russia, around 1,000 international observers will monitor the election, as stipulated in the 1990 Copenhagen Document of the CSCE. They will come from nearly 100 foreign countries and various international organizations. The absence of ODIHR representatives will not compromise the quality of international observation in any way.

This is by no means unprecedented. Even when invited, the ODIHR has repeatedly opted out of monitoring, presenting unfounded ultimatum-like demands that the Russian Federation, like other countries, is under no obligation to meet. They concerned mission timelines, the number of observers, and area restrictions as to where the ODIHR representatives wanted to work. The conditions offered in the past to this body have been far better than those offered to other international observers. In 2021, the ODIHR declined to observe the State Duma elections. It demonstratively rejected Russia's suggestions to reduce the number of observers on account of the COVID restrictions in place at the time. A similar pattern by the ODIHR was observed during the parliamentary and presidential elections in Russia in 2007 and 2008. First it came up with unacceptable monitoring parameters, then it refused to participate altogether.

The ODIHR has been used to communicating with OSCE participating States in an ultimatum-like language. While portrayed by the Western alliance as adhering to the ODIHR's gold standard, it is, in fact, an approach that includes diktat, browbeating and blackmail. This approach is ineffective with Russia.

The ODIHR does not hold an exclusive right to observe elections nor does it have the authority to certify or pass judgement on them. It is merely one of several potential international players in the field of election monitoring. In addition to it, there are other reputable international entities willing to participate in observing elections in Russia.

The Russian Federation and our like-minded colleagues have consistently proposed the elaboration of election monitoring rules acceptable to all OSCE participating States that would ensure an equitable, impartial and objective approach. There has still been no proper response to these proposals.

Russia has analysed the wealth of data on the ODIHR's activities. Election observation reports from all OSCE participating States since the 1990s have been examined. All of it reveals bias and inconsistency of the ODIHR methodology and a politicized approach to assessments of the electoral situation. There is a geographical division of States into "immature" and "mature" democracies, which is in fact tantamount to a division between States that are more loyal and less loyal to the collective West. This is largely responsible for the imbalance in the number of observers sent to countries east and west of Vienna.

In fact, the ODIHR carries out political orders, violating the principles of objectivity, impartiality and professionalism. This is evident in its election observation in some Western countries, where the globalist elites have recently lost some of their influence. Obvious flaws and irregularities in the electoral systems of Western countries continue to be glossed over or retouched, and criticism is focused exclusively on undesirable political forces.

At this point, the ODIHR and its Director have lost all credibility. This is reflected in particular in the joint press release by the Director of the ODIHR and OSCE officials dated 7 September 2023. Acting in violation of their own mandate, they went as far as to condemn the holding of Russian elections on the territory of the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics and the Zaporozhye and Kherson regions. This calumny has yet to be disavowed.

Under these circumstances, the ODIHR mission, unlike organizations with an unblemished reputation and adhering to the principles of objectivity and impartiality, has no place in the forthcoming presidential election in the Russian Federation.

Russia trusts that the leadership of the ODIHR and its fervent supporters will draw the proper conclusions from this situation and will make efforts to ensure that this institution enjoys the confidence of all OSCE participating States without exception.

Thank you for your attention.