



EMBASSY OF GEORGIA TO THE REPUBLICS OF AUSTRIA AND HUNGARY  
PERMANENT MISSION OF GEORGIA TO THE OSCE AND OTHER  
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN VIENNA

**S T A T E M E N T**

*Delivered by Ambassador Victor Dolidze at the 700<sup>th</sup> Permanent Council  
Vienna, 7 February, 2008*

Mr. Chairman,

Let me also welcome Ambassador Strohal to this Permanent Council meeting and express sincere gratitude for the continuous support rendered by the ODIHR in various fields related to the democratisation and human rights, especially on election-related issues in Georgia.

We consider the ODIHR as a key institution within the OSCE area and beyond, which makes valuable and in many cases decisive contribution to the improvement of all aspects of human dimension in the OSCE Member States. In particular we view ODIHR's contribution as indispensable in such areas as democratisation, protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, combating intolerance and discrimination, establishing liberal and pluralistic societies, including through the promotion of free and fair elections.

We commend the ODIHR activities to support Georgia to prepare and conduct elections. Through joint efforts together with the OSCE Mission in Georgia many improvements have been achieved already, but this further raised our awareness that even more is still to be done in order to comply with high European standards.

In particular I would like to stress the great importance of the ODIHR Election Observation Mission to monitor the Presidential Elections of January 5<sup>th</sup> in my country. This was so far the largest international EOM we have ever hosted in Georgia. We assess the interim reports delivered by the EOM as comprehensive documents, reflecting the existing situation in a balanced and adequate way. At the same time we are looking forward to the Final Report, from which we can analyze the lessons learnt and take into consideration recommendations delivered by this organization.

In fact, we are already thoroughly studying the recommendations of various international observers. Interagency Task Force on Free and Fair Elections of the Government of Georgia continues to work in that respect as well. Based on these recommendations and taking into account current shortcomings, the appropriate authorities are working on developing plan of action to further improve the electoral environment in Georgia by ensuring fair and democratic elections in adherence to the international standards. Georgian government has already asked OSCE, EU and Council of Europe to provide assistance and expertise to improve election environment.

The Central Elections Commission of Georgia in close cooperation with the Government of Georgia is already involved in an intensive dialogue with various international, including non-governmental, organizations over identifying specific areas, which require targeted efforts. Among these areas in our view the following require attention and improvement: better protection of voters' rights; ensuring transparency and accountability of the electoral process; implementation of all electoral procedures and meeting all legal deadlines, providing accurate information to all candidates; improvement of complaints submission and discussion system; optimization of the Electoral Administration; improvement of training formats.

We strongly believe that with the help from our international partners we can make our electoral system better and continue building on the successes that we have in conducting democratic and free elections in Georgia.

In conclusion, Ambassador Strohal, let me once again express appreciation for the excellent cooperation and wish you success for the coming months.