



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

STATEMENT ON THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN RUSSIA

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
8 March, 2012

Mr. Chairman,

We share the views expressed by the EU, the US and Switzerland, on behalf of Canada and Lichtenstein, on the Presidential election in Russia last Sunday.

The ODIHR election observers have through their preliminary report noted positive developments as well as shortcomings. We expect the Russian authorities to follow up on the recommendations that will be given in the final report from the observers, and we urge the Russian delegation to report back to the OSCE on the further co-operation with ODIHR on election improvements.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to draw your attention to a statement issued Monday by the Foreign Minister of Norway, H.E. Jonas Gahr Støre, in which he says, and I quote:

“The results indicate that Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has won a clear victory in the Russian presidential election and that voter turnout was high. Norway is ready to further develop its close cooperation with Russia. At the same time, despite improvements compared with the Duma elections in December, we are concerned by reports from international observers from the OSCE and the Council of Europe of serious shortcomings in the way the election was conducted. We will now await the election observers’ final report.

Over the past few months we have seen large groups of Russian society becoming actively involved in the political debate. This is an important and natural part of the development of democracy in Russia. We are pleased that the protests have so far been peaceful. We expect the authorities to continue to deal with the situation in a peaceful manner and respect the protesters' right to freedom of expression.

Relations between Norway and Russia have improved during the period in which Mr. Putin has held political responsibility. This applies generally to bilateral relations and in particular to cooperation between the two countries in the High North. The Norwegian authorities look forward to continuing their close cooperation with Mr. Putin when he takes over the presidency in May.

We also encourage the Russian leadership to focus more on developing the rule of law and democracy and promoting human rights.”

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.