



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

OSCE/ODIHR Election Seminar, Vienna 20 July 2015

Opening Address by Ambassador Robert Kvile, Permanent Representative of Norway to the OSCE and Chairman of the OSCE Human Dimension Committee

Mr Moderator,

Thank you for this opportunity to offer a few remarks on election observation and on follow-up of recommendations from ODIHR after such observations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We – the 57 OSCE participating States – have tasked ODIHR to conduct observations of elections in our countries. We have committed to follow-up on ODIHR's election assessments and recommendations.

We have asked ODIHR to play a key role in assisting us in our efforts to comply with our international commitments.

However, the responsibility to abide by the principles and to implement ODIHR recommendations rests first and foremost with ourselves. The organization's ability to assist depends on the political will of participating States to improve their electoral processes and to engage in genuine electoral reform.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me now turn to the Human Dimension Committee: How can this Committee contribute to full implementation of our elections commitments?

The OSCE has elements of a peer review system. Reporting back to fellow delegations on follow-up to recommendations is possible – not obligatory, and not systematic. But important. It could serve to strengthen our implementation of commitments and it could represent a useful sharing of lessons learned and best practises.

The Human Dimension Committee is a key forum for reporting back. Since 2011, when voluntary reporting by participating States was introduced as a standing agenda item for the Committee, we have had 65 reports, made by 31 individual States.

These reports have covered a wide variety of topics. The most frequently chosen topic, however, is follow-up of recommendations after election observations.

My own country, Norway, has made two voluntary reports to the Human Dimension Committee, both on elections.

We have also used these reports to explain which recommendations we do not intend to follow up, and why.

Ladies and gentlemen,

After four years and 65 reports time may now have come for reviewing the system of voluntary reporting to the Human Dimension Committee. How can we systematize it, improve it, make it more of a real peer review process? These are questions I intend to discuss with colleagues during the autumn.

Apart from voluntary reporting elections have however not really been an important topic for the Committee. Perhaps this topic is better served – better promoted – through seminars as the one we have today.

But I have a reservation. The purpose of discussions on election must be to strengthen the implementation of our commitments. Not the opposite.

The questions we must ask should therefore include: How can we make sure that ODIHR has the necessary resources to carry out observations according to their needs assessments?

How can peer-review through voluntary reporting – for example in the Human Dimension Committee – improve the exchange of lessons learned and of best practises?

How can such exchange of best practises and peer review enhance the quality of electoral processes in the OSCE participating States?

Thank you.