

Chairmanship: Ukraine

967th PLENARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

1. Date: Thursday, 17 October 2013

Opened: 10.05 a.m.

Closed: 11.30 a.m.

2. Chairperson: Ambassador I. Prokopchuk

3. Subjects discussed – Statements – Decisions/documents adopted:

Agenda item 1: REVIEW OF CURRENT ISSUES

(a) *Presidential election in Azerbaijan, held on 9 October 2013:* Azerbaijan (Annex), Lithuania-European Union (with the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia; the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Albania; as well as the European Free Trade Association country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, in alignment) (PC.DEL/819/13/Rev.1), United States of America (PC.DEL/820/13), Switzerland (also on behalf of Liechtenstein) (PC.DEL/822/13 OSCE+), Canada (PC.DEL/828/13 OSCE+), Belarus, Turkey (PC.DEL/825/13), Russian Federation (PC.DEL/831/13), Armenia (PC.DEL/824/13 OSCE+), Norway, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Chairperson

(b) *OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report on the Presidential Election in Mongolia, held on 26 June 2013:* Mongolia, United States of America (PC.DEL/826/13), Switzerland (also on behalf of Canada, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) (PC.DEL/821/13 OSCE+)

(c) *Freedom of the media in Lithuania:* Russian Federation (PC.DEL/832/13), Lithuania (PC.DEL/830/13)

Agenda item 2: REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE
CHAIRPERSON-IN-OFFICE

(a) *Visit of the Chairperson-in-Office to Central Asia:* Chairperson

- (b) *Participation of the Chairperson-in-Office at the high-level international conference entitled “Energy Security and Sustainability – the OSCE Perspective”, to be held in Ashgabat on 17 and 18 October 2013: Chairperson*
- (c) *OSCE Conference on Priority Issues for International Co-operation in the Fight against Terrorism, held in Kyiv on 10 and 11 October 2013: Chairperson*
- (d) *International Conference on Anti-Semitism on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Beilis Trial, held in Kyiv on 15 and 16 October 2013: Chairperson*
- (e) *Thirty-eighth meeting of the Ergneti Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM), to be held on 18 October 2013: Chairperson*
- (f) *Twenty-sixth round of the Geneva International Discussions, to be held in Geneva, Switzerland, on 5 and 6 November 2013: Chairperson*

Agenda item 3: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL

- (a) *Announcement of the distribution of the report of the Secretary General: Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre*
- (b) *Visit of the Secretary General to Rome on 14 October 2013: Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre*
- (c) *Participation of the Secretary General in the annual OSCE Focus Conference held at the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, Switzerland on 11 and 12 October 2013: Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre*
- (d) *First OSCE mediation course, held in Switzerland from 6 to 11 October 2013: Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre*
- (e) *Meeting of the open-ended informal working group on the conflict cycle, to be held on 22 October 2013: Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre*
- (f) *Launch of the new OSCE website: Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre*

Agenda item 4: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- (a) *International Day of the Girl Child, observed on 11 October: Canada (PC.DEL/829/13 OSCE+)*
- (b) *Autumn session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, held in Budva, Montenegro, from 13 to 15 October 2013: OSCE Parliamentary Assembly*

- (c) *OSCE Mediterranean Conference on Enhancing the Role of Women in Public, Political and Economic Life, to be held in Monaco on 28 and 29 October 2013*: Chairperson
- (d) *Regional workshop on the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1540, to be held in Kyiv on 5 and 6 November 2013 (CIO.GAL/135/13 OSCE+) (CIO.GAL/141/13 OSCE+)*: Chairperson
- (e) *Organizational matters related to draft Ministerial Council decisions in the human dimension*: Chairperson

4. Next meeting:

Thursday, 24 October 2013, at 10 a.m., in the Neuer Saal



967th Plenary Meeting

PC Journal No. 967, Agenda item 1(a)

STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF AZERBAIJAN

On 9 October 2013, the presidential election was held in the Republic of Azerbaijan. Ten candidates competed in the election. Close to 5,500 polling stations were established throughout Azerbaijan, which were connected to the State Automated Information System to ensure immediate and regular delivery of voters activity results on election day to the CEC's "Election" information centre. 1,000 polling stations (almost 20 per cent) were equipped with web-cameras for observing the voting process online.

More than 72 per cent of eligible voters cast their ballot that demonstrated high electoral activity by the people of Azerbaijan. The Central Election Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan announced the preliminary results on 10 October 2013. According to the CEC the incumbent President Ilham Aliyev won a landslide victory with 84.55 per cent of the votes.

During the voting day, the CEC did not receive any substantial complaints. Few complaints delivered via telephone were immediately resolved.

The election was observed by more than 53,000 observers, including 1,300 international observers representing the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, European Parliament, Commonwealth of Independent States, the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development – GUAM, the Organization for Islamic Cooperation, the Black Sea Economic Co-operation, the Economic Cooperation Organization, the Council of Turkic Speaking States, the ODIHR and other international organizations, as well as national delegations from nearly 100 European, Asian, North and South American countries. Heads and members of central electoral commissions of Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Moldova, Turkey and Latvia were also in Azerbaijan to observe the election. We would like to express our gratitude to these international organizations, national institutions and countries that positively responded to our request and sent their observers to Azerbaijan.

In addition, more than 50,000 local observers, including representatives of political parties, NGOs and independent observers monitored the election process. The election was covered by more than 100 foreign mass media.

A number of exit-polls were conducted at many polling stations and their results were mostly similar to the official statistics announced by the Central Election Commission of Azerbaijan.

The overall assessment of the presidential elections by international monitors was that the election was free, fair and transparent and constituted an important milestone towards democratic development of Azerbaijan. Electoral process was well administered and electoral procedure on the eve and on the election's day was carried out in a professional and peaceful way.

We thank all our friends and partners who congratulated President Aliyev on winning the elections, which were held in accordance with international standards.

I would like to express our thanks to H.E. Mr. Leonid Kozhara, the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, for his statement on the presidential election in Azerbaijan, in which he congratulated the people and leadership of Azerbaijan on this important achievement that represent a step forward in democratic development of the country. I would also thank H.E. Mr. Lamberto Zannier, OSCE Secretary General, for his congratulatory letter addressed to H.E. President Ilham Aliyev.

The 2013 election was an important step towards democratic development, establishment of free and rule of law based society in Azerbaijan. Election results once again showed that President Ilham Aliyev enjoys high confidence of overwhelming majority of voters, which associated an impressive record of Azerbaijan's political, economic and social development over the last decade with his name and chosen him to continue leading the country.

As for the ODIHR election assessment and the US Department of State statement on the presidential election in Azerbaijan, I would like to reiterate that we do not accept them as we consider them as non-objective, biased and detrimental to our relations. Such a one-sided election observation report, supported by similar assessments of the US State Department, has never been produced by the ODIHR in respect to election monitoring in Azerbaijan.

We suspect that such a report is deliberately designed in an attempt to exert a pressure on Azerbaijan, although we see no ground, no reason and no obvious perspective of such a pressure. Azerbaijani authorities from the very outset have emphasized that holding free, fair and transparent election is most of all in our own national interests.

It is deplorable that the ODIHR report and its authors attempted to distort the true essence of election results and to put a shadow on the genuine will expressed by the people of Azerbaijan. Some sporadic violations and technical irregularities were generalized and unfairly attributed to the whole outcome of election.

I wish to stress that yesterday Central Election Commission held its session to consider complaints launched since the election day and only eight cases of irregularities were presented by appellants. The question is where are those violations registered by the ODIHR and which constituted the basis for their assessment.

Out of more than 1,300 observers only the ODIHR came up with the groundless and controversial assessment of the election, taking no heed to the findings and conclusions of rest of the International Election Observation Mission, which were the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly observer team lead by Ms. Dorris Barnet, 280 OSCE short-term observers led by Mr. Michel Voisin, Special Co-ordinator for the OSCE appointed by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office as well as election monitoring missions of the Parliamentary Assembly the Council of Europe and of European Parliament. Heads of these four election monitoring missions refused to undersign the assessments of the ODIHR since the ODIHR rejected their observations to be included into the Mission report. Such a ridiculous and awkward situation where the ODIHR found itself not for the first time undermines not only trust and credibility of the Azerbaijani authorities, but also the ODIHR's election partners in the field.

I wish to recall that Azerbaijani authorities on a number of times have raised serious questions with respect to the ODIHR's methodology of election observation, especially in response to the ODIHR's Needs Assessment Mission Report and to the ODIHR's Interim Report on the presidential election in Azerbaijan issued earlier this year. The ODIHR failed to substantively address the comments of the Azerbaijani side and limited itself with some few technical revisions.

We believe that such a biased election assessment by the ODIHR adds no credit to its authority, nor increases our trust to its role and methodology it applies for election observation. The ODIHR's activity in the entire pre-election and the election day processes in Azerbaijan has been highly politicized. Despite the openness and co-operative approach of the Azerbaijani side as well as of overwhelming majority of international observers, the ODIHR team in Azerbaijan failed to demonstrate a constructive engagement and understanding.

We suspect that the ODIHR's technical findings and conclusions is used as a tool for political pressure and that is worrisome situation that requires a detailed consideration by the Permanent Council.

The Azerbaijani side sincerely regrets that the ODIHR that was established to render assistance to OSCE participating States in election-related matters has been transformed into a tool for destabilizing a society and the election assessment reports produced by the ODIHR could provoke a smear campaign in international media.

Until some major countries continue abusing the ODIHR's selective judgement for preferential treatment of OSCE participating States, this institution impartiality, independence and professionalism as well as methodology it employs are seriously undermined.

Mr. Chairperson,

I found the letter of 14 October by the Director of the ODIHR addressed to H.E. Minister Leonid Kozhara, OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, on one hand as a sign of despair, and on the other as a demonstration of unhealthy ambition to impose on the OSCE leadership the unfounded allegations of the ODIHR. Needless to say, that Mr. Lenarčič' assumptions are not shared by any other election observation mission. Similarly, his desire to

attach to the ODIHR a highest level of professional judgement is also compromised in view of my above-mentioned arguments.

I believe that a role acclaimed by the ODIHR Director in the letter could be valid, if he and institution he led had enjoyed a support and trust of all OSCE participating States. But this obviously is not a case. More and more often the ODIHR's election observation reports become a subject of manipulation, political pressure, unilateral actions and other non-co-operative approaches promoted by some delegations in the OSCE. This is not normal. Every OSCE participating State is distinct in its development path and security environment it finds itself. How the ODIHR experts seconded by OSCE participating States could claim that they are the only source of legitimacy of election assessments if they could hardly possess any knowledge of the region, the country and threats existing in such parts of the OSCE region.

Therefore our Delegation strongly suggests reviewing the abnormal role played by the ODIHR in joint election observation mission in some countries as well as the methodology it employs to assess electoral processes and environment. With this in mind we intend to prepare a concise draft decision for Kyiv Ministerial Council meeting that hopefully will launch the discussions on this important issue.

Democratic and independent development is a conscious choice and irreversible path made by the people of Azerbaijan. This choice has been made in the best interest of our nation and entire OSCE region. Having clear vision for the future of Azerbaijan and enjoying overwhelming support and trust of its people, the President of Azerbaijan will continue his efforts for strengthening democratic and prosperous Azerbaijan, as an important contributor to peace and development of the OSCE region.

I kindly request this statement to be attached to the journal of the day.

Thank you.