



Permanent Mission  
of the Federal Republic of Germany  
to the OSCE  
Vienna

PC.DEL/669/07  
28 June 2007

ENGLISH only



## German Presidency of the Council of the European Union

### **672<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Permanent Council**

**28 June 2007**

### Statement of the European Union in response to the Report of the Director of the ODIHR, Ambassador Christian Strohal

The European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Strohal back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his presentation.

On 8 May, at the informal briefing called by the ODIHR, the EU commended the efforts of the ODIHR in taking forward the recommendations of its report '*Common Responsibility*', and implementation of the Brussels taskings directed to the ODIHR including those in Ministerial Council decision 19/06 on strengthening the effectiveness of the OSCE. We were pleased, on that occasion, to welcome the presentation of a new Long Term Observer Handbook as one example of the work undertaken by the ODIHR to further strengthen the election observation methodology and assistance programmes in line with Ministerial Council decision 19/06. And we welcome news today of further substantial progress including a series of new and updated guidelines, new recruitment processes, training courses, and increased translation.

In addition we have since welcomed the broad geographical diversity in recent election-related activities as a reflection of the success of the ODIHR's continued efforts to expand geographical representation. The EU recalls its attachment to good cooperation between the ODIHR and the Parliamentary Assembly on the basis of the 1997 Cooperation Agreement, as well as with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. In this regard, we were glad to see good cooperation during the recent Election Observation Mission to Armenia and trust that future co-operation will be undertaken in similar fashion with the production

of a single preliminary statement of findings and conclusions in line with standard practice over the last decade. We continue to appreciate the efforts made by the Chairmanship to facilitate such co-operation.

Mr Chair, we believe that the OSCE's election related activities have gained global recognition principally because the ODIHR's methodology is based on a consistent, systematic, facts-based approach enabling objective findings and authoritative conclusions to be reached. The integrity of this methodology, which EU Election Observation Missions also use outside the OSCE region, is an indispensable instrument for the consolidation of democracy. We assure Ambassador Strohal of our unstinting support for this and his Office's other election-related activities.

We remind participating States that implementation of Decision 19/06 is a common endeavour. In it, participating States reaffirmed their determination to address shortcomings in the implementation of commitments. We thank the ODIHR for the ideas presented to the Human Dimension Committee on 29 May on how to enhance follow-up to the recommendations contained in ODIHR final election reports. The EU will continue to support and contribute to discussions also in the Committee on how to enhance implementation of all human dimension commitments by all.

The recent conference on tolerance and non-discrimination in Bucharest reminded us all of the challenges that we face in eradicating intolerance and discrimination of all forms across the OSCE, and of the need for greater focus on practical approaches to this end. We consider that the ODIHR has developed valuable expertise - in legislative review, law enforcement training, data collection and analysis, and in the development of teaching materials - and can play a major role in assisting participating States. We commend the attention paid by the ODIHR to coordination with other international actors and civil society, and welcome the further strengthening of the programme in line with Ministerial Council decision 13/06 as evidenced by the successful establishment of the TANDIS website and the initiative to publish annually the ODIHR report on *'Hate Crimes in the OSCE Region – Incidents and Responses.'* The EU looks forward to thorough discussions during the special days of the HDIM on tolerance and non-discrimination, and the challenges faced by women and the Roma & Sinti community including participating States' efforts through the implementation of Action Plans to overcome these.

The EU greatly valued the exchange of views at the first SHDM of the year on

*Freedom of Association, Assembly and Expression* and shares Ambassador Strohal's hope that follow-up to this meeting and the forthcoming SHDM on *The Promotion and Protection of Human Rights* will enable the identification of concrete progress at the HDIM. In this regard the EU underlines two of its closely held principles: that demonstrations should be subject to notification to the authorities, not dependant on permission; and, that registration with the authorities should not be a requirement of the right to association. The EU was glad that the former point was captured in the ODIHR's excellent *Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly*.

We hope that the July SHDM will reinforce the message from the Human Dimension Seminar: that human rights are best respected in democratic societies where decisions are taken with maximum transparency and broad participation. We encourage participating States to take advantage of the ODIHR Democratisation Department's expertise in developing inclusive democratic processes. We repeat our support for the Human Rights Department Focal Point in promoting the crucial work of Human Rights Defenders and National Human Rights Institutions in this regard.

EU Member States have again benefited this year from the broad and valuable expertise these and the other thematic programmes offer to participating States. The EU looks forward to the forthcoming ODIHR publications mentioned in Ambassador Strohal's report including the *'Manual on Human Rights in the Fight against Terrorism'*, and *'Reference Guide on Trial monitoring'*. We remain strong supporters of the ODIHR's efforts in tackling Trafficking in Human Beings, and stand ready to assist the ODIHR with the preparation of the important third SHDM of the year on the sexual exploitation of children, including its link to trafficking in human beings.

Mr Chair, as indicated, the ODIHR's workload is not light, but the performance and professionalism of its staff yields impressive results. Our thanks go to Ambassador Strohal and his staff for the important work that they do.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia, EFTA countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

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\* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.