



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE to the Russian Duma elections

As delivered by Ambassador Guttorm Vik
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
6 December 2007

There is no doubt that Putin and his party “United Russia” enjoy great support in Russia. At the same time it is clear that the opposition had limited possibilities to present itself during the election campaign. We also note that both the opposition and some heavy-weight international observers, like the Parliamentary Assemblies of both the OSCE and the Council of Europe, have made a number of critical remarks in relation to the way the Duma elections in Russia were carried out. We expect Russia to take these observations seriously, and to take them duly into account on future occasions.

There is growing concern in Norway over the negative democratic development in Russia, with restrictions on the freedom of speech, freedom of the media and control over civil society.

In light of the irregularities that were observed during the elections themselves, we restate our regret that ODIHR, due to unprecedented restrictions imposed on it by the host state, could not conduct a full-fledged election observation, according to the established standards.

I recall once again that ODIHR’s main contribution to international election observation has been to develop a methodology for election observation covering not only the actual conduct of the elections on election day, but also the electoral campaign and the entire election process. This methodology is held in generally high regard internationally for its thoroughness, comprehensiveness and objectivity, and is often referred to as the “gold standard” in international election observation.

As my government sees it, ODIHR is a useful instrument for all of us, to ensure the legitimacy of elections. We think that election monitoring should take place both “East and West of Vienna”, and would welcome ODIHR to observe future elections in Norway. I also encourage Russia to extend an early invitation to the ODIHR to observe the presidential elections in March next year.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.