

PA VP Tone Tingsgaard leads OSCE Observation of parliamentary elections in Belarus



Tone Tingsgaard talking to the Chairman of a Polling Station Commission in Minsk

On 18 October 2004 in Minsk, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Vice-President Tone Tingsgaard delivered the preliminary post-election statement on the 17 October parliamentary elections in Belarus, in conjunction with Ambassador Audry Glover, Head of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission. The statement concluded that the elections in Belarus fell significantly short of OSCE commitments for democratic elections. The Belarusian authorities failed to ensure the fundamental conditions necessary for the will of the people to serve as a basis for authority of government. Freedom of expression, association and assembly

were seriously challenged. This calls into question the willingness of the authorities to respect the concept of political competition on a basis of equal treatment, stated the OSCE Election Observation Mission. "Democratic principles were largely disregarded by the authorities. Many candidates were actively excluded from registering or were deregistered, which limited the choice of voters", said OSCE PA Vice-President Tone Tingsgaard, appointed by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office as Special Co-ordinator for the Short-term Observers. "Although we were here to observe the parliamentary elections, we found that the Referendum largely

overshadowed the parliamentary election campaign." The Statement also stressed that the OSCE and its institutions represented in the Election Observation Mission remain prepared and committed to assist the national authorities, including the National Assembly, and the civil society of Belarus, to overcome the impediments to the conduct of democratic elections. They call upon the Belarusian authorities to respond positively and create the conditions for a meaningful democratic electoral process in the Republic of Belarus. In this spirit of co-operation, they welcome the National Assembly of Belarus to actively participate in the work of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

The OSCE PA observer team included 50 parliamentarians from Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the United Kingdom. The Team also included Deputy Secretary General Pentti Väänänen, Councillor Jan Jooren and Programme Officer Paul LeGendre from the International Secretariat. Prior to election day the parliamentarians attended an extensive briefing programme, during which they heard from leaders of the main political parties, representatives of the mass media, observers and experts. On election day, parliamentary observer teams were deployed in the Minsk area.