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**FIFTH EASTERN PARTNERSHIP  
FACILITY SEMINAR  
ON ELECTION OBSERVATION  
AND CENTRAL ELECTORAL COMMISSIONS**

**Council of Europe  
Meeting Room No. 8**

**Strasbourg, France  
25-26 November 2013**

**GUIDELINES ON AN INTERNATIONALLY  
RECOGNISED STATUS OF ELECTION OBSERVERS**

**by Mr Owen MASTERS  
Expert, United Kingdom**

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**Guidelines on an Internationally  
Recognised Status of Election Observers**

**Strasbourg**

**25 – 26 November 2013**

**Owen Masters**

**Venice Commission Consultant**

**United Kingdom**

## **Role of Election Observers.**

**Role of Election Observers is to observe if there are irregularities in the election process:**

- Prior to Election Day**
- Election Day**
- After Election Day**

- **International and Domestic Observers must be granted the same freedoms and rights**
- **Observation is to assess if an election is conducted in accordance with international standards and national legislation**
- **Observers must be able to ascertain if laws or actions of the State obstruct the exercise of election related rights which are guaranteed by Law, and international human rights instruments**

# **Election Observation – Where?**

- **Election Observation of the whole electoral process should be made possible**
- **If there are places where observers are not permitted to observe, these should be specified by law**
- **Observation must be made possible where ever it is necessary, including those places other than election premises**

# Periods of Election Observation

- **Pre-Election Day**
- **Election Day**
- **Post Election Day**

# **Pre- Election Day Observation to include Legal Provisions of the**

- **Election Administration**
- **Legal Framework to include electoral system, and equality of constituency**
- **Registration of Voters and maintenance of the Voters List**
- **Registration of Political Parties and candidates**



# **Pre- Election Day Observation – Campaign Activities**

- **Funding of Election Campaigns**
- **Advertising opportunities**
- **Media Conduct during Election Campaign**
- **Equal accessibility to undertake meetings and rallies**

## **Pre-Election Day Observation – Opinion Polls**

- **Observing the reporting of opinion polls  
These should be undertaken within certain  
guidelines ensuring that:**
- **The name of the organisation, political party,  
media which commissioned and/or paid for  
the poll.**
- **How the poll was organised and  
methodology used.**

- **The sample and margin of error of the poll.**
- **The date or period when the poll was conducted.**

# **Pre- Election Day – Media**

## **Observation**

**The principles of fairness, impartiality, and balance by the media should apply to all elections, that is national, regional, local and where practicable referenda.**

- Clear distinction in reporting between official state duties and Election Campaign**
- Non discrimination**
- The Right of Reply**

- **Free Air time and Media Space for all Political Parties and Candidates**
- **The possibility of buying advertising space should be available to all contending parties, on consistent and equal conditions and with equal rates of payment.**
- **Transmission times should be consistent and programmed at equal times for all parties.**

- **Space provided in the print media should accord with the principle of equality of opportunity.**
- **The public is aware that the message is a paid political advertisement.**
- **Is there a provision which could be considered, to introduce a limit to the amount of political advertising space, which a party or candidate can purchase.**

## **Pre-Election Observation**

**Observers must be in a position to note if action by the state, election officials or the conduct of the media are in contravention of the law, and obstruct the exercise of election rights.**

- Observers will note that the rights of the media are protected and journalists are not impeded or harassed.**

- **Responsibility of media and observers to meet and discuss the analysis of media observation.**
- **The right of reply should be granted to the media by observer organisations, enabling the media to respond to criticism by observer media analysts.**



# **Election Day**

## **Observers should be present:**

- before the opening of voting, and prior to the sealing of the ballot boxes**
- All phases of voting requires observation including voting in prisons, military institutions, as well as people in hospital or those with disabilities**
- Close of voting, counting of votes or the sealing of ballot boxes.**

# **Post- Election Day Observation**

- **Counting process**
- **Tabulation process**
- **Transmission and publication of preliminary results**
- **Complaints and Appeals procedures**
- **Publication of the final results**

# **Responsibilities of Observers – They Should**

- **comply with national laws and regulations**
- **be impartial and not obstruct or interfere with the election process**
- **avoid any comments in mass media and decline requests for interviews**
- **present a respectful attitude towards election officials, national authorities, and all other participants in the process**

