

**Remarks of the Head of Mission  
on the occasion of the Global Election Day  
4 February 2010**

Members of the Central Election Commission, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I am honored to be invited to join you, once again, in marking Global Election Day, which is celebrated worldwide. I am especially pleased that the OSCE can take part in this event, traditionally organised by the Central Election Commission, and that I have the opportunity to share some brief remarks with you.

Free and fair elections are the basis of all democratic systems. They are also at the core of OSCE values. The organisation I represent – an organization of which Bosnia and Herzegovina is a full and active member -- has long recognised the link between democratic elections and lasting stability and peace. In other words, democracy is central to progress in developing a peaceful, secure, open and just society. Security – genuine security – is comprehensive.

The OSCE is perhaps best known in this region for its role in promoting free and fair elections. And so it should be. The establishment of a functional and independent election administration system in BiH is one of the OSCE's biggest achievements in this country.

Even as a young democracy, Bosnia and Herzegovina has already demonstrated its technical capability to conduct free and fair elections. I congratulate the Central Election Commission for this. This year again, you will need to meet and overcome an array of challenges in order to administer the General Elections. I am confident that with your expertise and dedication you will succeed in organising elections successfully and in line with international standards.

However, even if an election process is a celebration of fundamental freedoms and human rights, the protection and advancement of democratic rights is a never-ending process. Free and fair elections demand that election administration bodies, political leaders, voters and candidates play by the rules and observe the laws. Indeed, the electoral *system* that a country adopts can be just as important, if not more so, than the practical exercise of elections.

Today, Bosnia and Herzegovina finds itself at a turning point which will define its future in Europe and the transatlantic community. Key legislative changes affecting the political system in Bosnia and Herzegovina are still to be adopted and implemented. Such changes must ensure that all citizens – all *individuals* -- in Bosnia and Herzegovina enjoy the same rights before the law. The recent ruling of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg should be viewed not only as an obligation to comply with Bosnia's commitments on Human Rights and the Rule of Law, which it is, but also as an opportunity: an opportunity to improve the existing system, to secure the rights of *all* BiH citizens. In short, you can and you must create a system that will permit more effective and democratic governance en route to this country's European home. Without such changes, the deserving citizens of this country will find that path blocked.

I am confident that each of you, whether as members of election administration bodies, voters or elected officials, will respond to these challenges with dedication, professionalism, and a clear focus on the public interest. The moment calls for nothing less.

I wish you every success in this vital work, and assure you of the OSCE's continuing support and partnership.

Thank you.