

**10th implementation meeting of the declaration of principles for international election
observation
21-22 October 2015, New York**

On 21 and 22 October 2015, the Electoral Assistance Division of the United Nations Department of Political Affairs (UNEAD) hosted the 10th implementation meeting of the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation (DoP meeting), at the United Nations Headquarters. Twenty four organizations that have endorsed the DoP (out of 52) as well as two guest organizations attended the meeting through a total number of about 60 participants (full list of participating organizations and their representatives is attached).

Opening Session:

In his opening remarks, Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, the United Nations Under-Secretary for Political Affairs who is also the UN Focal Point for electoral assistance activities, noted the diversity of organizations represented in the two-day meeting, collectively representing Inter-governmental and Non-governmental organizations from every corner of the world. He noted that it was the responsibility of sovereign states to ensure periodic and genuine elections that reflect the will of the people. However, when requested, the international community should be willing to step in -even in difficult and critical situations - to support national efforts for peaceful, credible and inclusive elections. He indicated that the United Nations was providing technical assistance, upon request, to over 67 Member States in the past two years. Election observation, which requires a mandate from the Security Council or General Assembly, is rare for the UN and most of the Organization's support to Member States is of technical nature. This past year, however, the United Nations Election Observation Mission to Burundi (MENUB) was deployed following a mandate from the Security Council. It was deployed in a very complex and volatile environment in which many other organizations decided the condition was not conducive for fielding observers. Despite limited involvement in deploying observers, the United Nations Secretariat remains unwavering in its support for the Declaration and its Code of Conduct. The UN believes that these are key tools in ensuring the continued professionalism and neutrality of election observation missions, and in creating a community of observers who can more constructively share information and best practices, and resolve problems in critical electoral environments.

Panel discussion on Stock taking of the Past 10 Years of the DoP Implementation, Accomplishments and Challenges

In the panel discussion moderated by EAD Director, Mr. Craig Jenness, representatives from the Organization of American States (OAS), African Union (AU), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe/Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) European Parliament (EP/EU), National Democratic Institute (NDI), UN Electoral Assistance Division (UNEAD) and The Carter Center (TCC) made presentations referring to the achievements made, and challenges faced, by the DoP in the past 10 years. Ambassador Néstor Méndez, Assistant Secretary General of the OAS noted that the DoP had become the normative framework for credible election observation. He noted that the Americas region had changed significantly since the OAS conducted its first observation mission in Costa Rica in 1962, and that as democracies matured, election

observation has evolved as well. While the original focus was on technicalities, the overall quality of an election is now being considered. The DoP influenced this evolution with, for example, the development by OAS of a standardized methodology and tools to make observation missions more diverse- which happened only one year after the signing of the DoP. The DoP highlights that observation is not limited to the deployment of a mission, and that recommendations should be formulated as appropriate, and that follow ups on those recommendations are necessary. In that regards, OAS has developed a database, which helped in systematizing reporting and recommendations. OAS also listed some key challenges, in particular financial limits to election observation when budgets are being cut back; and the wrong perception that election observation bears responsibility for electoral integrity. Another challenge is that not all observers comply with the DoP principles. It is therefore necessary that the principles be understood by the wider public; the DoP be promoted as the standard; and that election observation be peer-reviewed. He added that follow-ups on recommendations require a permanent dialogue.

Mr. Khabele Matlosa, Director of Political Affairs of the AU underlined his organization's key role in election observation in Africa, and noted that in conducting its election observation functions the AU coordinates closely with regional communities, parliaments and civil society organizations (CSOs). The AU previously waited for invitations to observe elections, but observation is now systematic, with only a confirmation to the member state before deployment. The normative framework for AU election observation includes the DoP, the UN Charter, the AU Charter, the AU Declaration on Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa, and Guidelines for African Union Electoral Observations and Monitoring Missions. Relevant frameworks of regional organizations are also observed. The AU methodology has also been influenced by the DoP, and is now built on 5 phases of observation: pre-election assessment missions; high level political missions sometimes jointly with regional organizations (e.g. the joint mission with ECOWAS in Nigeria); deployment of long term observers/ short term observes; and post-election and evaluation missions. Mr. Matlosa noted that certain lessons can be drawn from AU's experience; in particular that engagement with other actors, such as parliaments and CSOs, is necessary and helpful, and referred to the need to carefully consider the issues related to sovereignty of member states when looking at challenges facing election observation. He also noted that there is a need, in particular in countries which are in transition, for an analysis beyond purely electoral matters as the tension between peace and democracy and the challenges of inclusive governance require election observation missions to focus on issues beyond elections. The AU election observation has evolved a lot since 2005, in particular with the strengthening of preventive diplomacy.

Mr. Michael Link, Director of OSCE/ODHIR, stressed the importance of the principles of the DoP, and in particular that it must be made clear to the wider public and host states that when it comes to election observation, certain principles are not negotiable or the credibility of the observation cannot be compromised. This requires the DoP community to promote the emerging consensus around the Principles of the DoP and defend it where and when it is under threat. OSCE also notes that the composition and scope of election observation missions has to be tailored to the context, and that in certain contexts the deployment of a large mission may not be necessary, as we have seen examples where major constitutional changes have happened following the recommendations of missions made up of only two experts.

Ms. Ana Gomez, Member of the European Parliament, noted that the DoP allowed the standards to develop, and helped reinforce the legitimacy of election observation missions. In turn, election observation missions contribute to build peace, prevent conflict and build democracy. European election observation missions are usually headed by a parliamentarian, and short term observers include parliamentarians, who assist with wider efforts at building democracy and preventing conflict. She also stressed that for election observation missions to make a real impact concrete recommendations by them are necessary, and noted that implementation of such recommendations depends on national political will, but also on the wider context. The interaction of observers with authorities helps in preventing conflict too. Ms. Gomez warned against the assumption that observation missions are more useful in non-mature democracies. She also asked if observation missions are victims of their success, with many countries keen on having observation missions' seal of legitimacy, while seeking to limit their capacity to observe or trying to influence their statements. In that regard, it is essential that all observers and high level politicians, be adequately briefed and follow official statements. Ms. Gomez also referred to the example of how the EP had an internal debate and reacted to comments by its own observers in 2013 in Azerbaijan.

Mr. Pat Merloe, Director of Electoral Programs in NDI, noted that the DoP had forged a strong community of practice. Since its first mission in the Philippines in 1986, NDI has so far deployed some 250 electoral missions of various sorts. NDI draws lessons from this experience, highlighting in particular the strength coming from international cooperation, and cooperation with national observers. Recalling the years leading to the adoption of the DoP, Mr. Merloe mentioned some of the issues that led to the DoP as they exist today. Among other things, at the time, a certain confusion on the role of observation missions demanded a set of principles, stronger cooperation of election observers, and some peer accountability to improve the quality of observation. The DoP was meant to be informal and voluntary. A Convening Committee was instituted to support the overall process. Looking at the challenges, mainly coming from outside of the narrow area of elections but with strong political influences on elections, Mr. Merloe emphasized the need to coordinate with other initiatives tackling other aspects of governance and political processes. In addition, he strongly recommended focusing on the core requirements of the DoP that are protecting and promoting the principles, coordinating among election observations, and ensuring peer accountability.

Amb. Mary Ann Peters, CEO of The Carter Center, addressed some of the developments we have seen in international election observation since the endorsement of the DoP, including: regular meetings that allow us to work together more effectively to address some of the most pressing challenges facing election observation, while also critically reflecting on our work and methods, and sharing lessons learned; increased collaboration and cooperation among our organizations at the field and headquarters level, before during and after election observation missions; and better coordination with citizen observation organizations. Citing the responses to the survey sent out to endorsers before the meeting, Amb. Peters highlighted that many organizations internalize the DoP principles through the use of a Code of Conduct, but that there remains work to be done to better understand the impact of international election observation on the participation of women in electoral and political processes. Going forward she called on DoP endorsers to face a number of important challenges, including: the political challenges involved in electoral contests; defining the role, if any that international observers can play in addressing the declines in

freedom and rule of law that we have seen in many countries and determining how observation can help re-incentivize states to be more accountable to their populations.

In the discussion that followed this first panel, participants referred to the links between the ‘narrow area of elections’ and other governance and constitutional matters. The role and limits of observers in conducting their functions in certain contexts were also discussed. The issues of follow up to recommendations and engagement with national stakeholders during the period in between elections were also raised by several participants. In that regard, Ambassador Peters noted the high stakes of elections in many contexts and the built-in incentives for incumbents to stay in power, stressing the importance of mitigating this in between elections. Recalling the recent case of Nigeria, Former President Goodluck Jonathan would probably have deserved more praise. Mr. Matlosa pointed to the need for an advocacy role for reforms and governance issues in between elections, in line with recommendations formulated by observation missions. Mr. Merloe noted that specific conditions are necessary for reforms, with some windows of opportunity to be seized. This is a broader process than a simple focus on technicalities of election administration.

Session One: Following up on Recommendations of Electoral Observation Missions

In a session moderated by Mr. Matlosa, Mr. Gerardo de Icaza Hernández of the OAS explained how his organization started systematizing the reports of election observation missions. In this regard, a section of the mission reports previously entitled ‘technical cooperation’ was now renamed ‘follow up to recommendations’. All observation missions’ budgets include follow up as well. The kind of follow up that is required is very context specific. At times it will include taking specific and relatively easy steps in directly contacting and working with the election management body (EMB), and at other times may focus on the requirement for more comprehensive legislative reforms which would need the involvement and cooperation of a wider range of actors. More recently in its follow up work, the OAS sends questionnaires to EMBs, asking what measures they are taking with regard to the recommendations formulated by its observation missions. Out of 28 countries contacted so far, only 5 have replied, some complaining of intrusion into sovereign matters. The existing database and the factsheets for each mission help to systematize the recommendations of the missions and facilitate steps related to follow ups. Research carried out by the Electoral Integrity Project (Pr. Pippa Norris) found that 55% of OAS observation missions’ recommendations were actually implemented, illustrating the existence of some will to implement recommendations. He also noted that currently the three sets of methodologies developed and used by OAS focus on inclusion, electoral process and electoral integrity (understood to also include electoral violence and security, political finance and the use of state public resources).

Ms. Beata Martin-Rozumilowicz of the OSCE/ODIHR highlighted the intensified focus by OSCE/ODIHR on follow up to recommendations, and also the upcoming publication of a handbook on the topic. She noted that election observation is not an end in itself, but rather aims at assisting receiving states to strengthen their democratic processes. OSCE/ODIHR and other organizations can provide guidance and recommendations but indeed implementation remains at the discretion of states. This sometimes includes review of certain practices or frameworks by parliaments or by the EMBs themselves, or support to civil society organizations to conduct an independent review. OSCE/ODIHR does not have the capacity to implement large scale technical assistance projects, but still ensures

some follow up and advocacy to assist states in between elections. The organization also supports national citizen observation groups with a standard training.

Mr. Emanuele Giaufret of the European External Action Service (EU/EEAS), referred to follow ups to EOMs as a 'raison d'être' of international election observation, as the EOMs' recommendations need to be translated into practical actions to be useful. He noted that the EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy highlights the importance of the DoP and call for the consolidation of best practices in leveraging recommendations, in particular of the EU and OSCE/ODIHR election observation reports. As an illustration of EU practice, Mr. Giaufret mentioned that EU Heads of Delegation and EU Ambassadors are requested to report regularly on implementation of EOM's recommendations, and civil society organizations are also supported in advocating for the implementation of their own recommendations. The EU/EEAS also undertakes stock taking and ad hoc follow up missions, usually led by the former Chief Observer. Mr. Giaufret also discussed key conditions for recommendations to be implemented. He noted in particular the quality of recommendations, which need to be sound, and possibly prioritized. He also added that in this regard national political will as well as adequate support including from international partners, where appropriate, are necessary to ensure the implementation of the recommendations. The EU can mobilize the support from its own institutions when necessary. Widening the scope of interlocutors, with consideration given to actors beyond national authorities may also help with both the will to reform, and the capacity to do so. This would include political actors and civil society organizations in particular, but also regional bodies.

Ms. Avery Davis-Roberts, explained the Carter Center's coordination with human rights institutions with regards to election observation mission reports. She noted in particular that many of the rights protected by international and regional instruments are related to the technicalities of an electoral process. Also, human rights institutions seek information from all credible sources, and election observation mission reports bring valuable information to them. These institutions include treaty bodies which interpret, review and offer general comments, but also special rapporteurs, either thematic or country specific. Concise, strong and implementable recommendations are necessary. Recommendations also need to reach any relevant body in a timely manner, and fit their needs and possible specific formats. The Carter Center also liaises with national citizens groups to voice their concerns, and share their own recommendations with national human rights institutions.

In opening the discussion to the floor, Mr. Matlosa emphasized that observation is not carried out for its own sake, but indeed to support people's rights and advance democracy. Among the key points raised during the discussion was the quality requirement for recommendations to be useful, and the role of both human rights bodies and technical assistance in following up on recommendations for actual implementation. Human rights bodies in particular offer additional avenues to discuss and advocate for this matter. It was also emphasized that more technical recommendations could be supported through technical assistance. However, most recommendations include legislative reforms, therefore requiring an actual political dialogue. UNDP noted its increased work with parliaments, including assistance to their work, a trend that can assist with following up on recommendations formulated by election observation missions. The consistency of recommendations, across time and place, was discussed too, with some nuance necessary, considering international standards on the one hand, and the reality of each country on the other.

Session Two: Election Observation as a tool to promote gender equality in electoral processes

This session, which was moderated by Mr. Denis Kadima from EISA, discussed the importance of promoting women's participation through election observation and technical assistance activities. Mr. Craig Jenness, of UNEAD, noted that gender equality and mainstreaming gender in all activities is one of the key priorities of the United Nations and stressed that women's participation not only is a key requirement for consolidating democracy and democratic processes but is also fundamental for sustainable peace and development. He noted that although we have seen some increase in the average global rate of women MPs since the 2005 Beijing Conference, the progress in the numbers of elected and appointed positions held by women has been painfully slow and uneven. Highlighting some of the challenges women are facing as candidates, voters and electoral officials, Mr. Jenness stressed that our advocacy messages should be universal and also include countries that are not receiving international electoral support as both the developing and developed democracies need to do more to promote women's political participation.

Ms. Sara Mia Noguera, of the OAS, presented the OAS methodology for inclusion of all minorities, including women. Beyond providing guidance on the inclusion of women in the composition of OAS missions, the observation methodology also contains provisions on how to monitor the participation of women in the electoral processes as voters, candidates and electoral officials/administrators. In reviewing the impact of their methodology, the OAS has found that since 2013, almost half of all mission staff members have been women, against only a quarter before that period. Recommendations of the OAS missions have also become more focused and targeted with regard to key gender equality issues. They target in particular issues such as quotas and their actual effectiveness, low percentage of women in political parties and their decision-making positions, media coverage imbalance, limited campaign finances, and political violence against women.

Ms. Beata Martin-Rozumilowicz of the OSCE/ODIHR recalled the targets and objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Security Council Resolution 1325 with regard to women's participation. She explained how ODIHR's methodology is based on obligations in CEDAW and ICCPR. There is approximately one gender specific recommendation per observation mission report, but gender related recommendations are closer to 200 if these are 'unpacked', relating to registration, access to ballot, language of temporary special measures, or the media.

Ms. Sabra Bano of Gender Concerns International made a presentation on how her NGO engages with civil society organizations and women's groups at the local level. She pointed out the need for acceptance of international methodology and training standards by local partner organizations. Through its democracy programme, the NGO also liaises with newly elected officials to discuss recommendations and their implementation. Highlighting the particular challenges of the MENA region with regard to women's participation in the electoral processes, she called for a specific MENA roadmap.

During the discussion which followed the above presentations, the EU noted that women's representation in its missions had improved, albeit with major gaps with regards to the position of deputy head and head of missions and statisticians. The importance of existing

international framework including CEDAW General Recommendations as well as the 2011 General Assembly Resolution on Women and Political Participation which invites member states to consider the differential impact of their electoral systems on women's participation was also highlighted by some participants, including UN Women, during the discussion. Ms. Ana Gomez noted that women's access to electoral processes can be seen as an indicator of the dynamics of political space, with their limited access often being related to closing political spaces.

Answering some questions, Ms. Sara Mia Noguera emphasized that women are sometimes reluctant to acknowledge they are being pressured within their own political parties. Ms. Sabra Bano noted that advocacy requires a lot of hard work, and stressed the importance of, and necessity for, investments in civil society in this regard. Mr. Craig Jenness noted that while the United Nations usually does not provide training support to candidates and political parties to avoid being perceived as supporting one political group or another, training women candidates is in some cases the exception to that practice. With regard to the number of women in observation missions, Ms. Beata Martin-Rozumilowicz mentioned the drop in applications received from women. Mr. Craig Jenness noted a similar trend with the UN roster of electoral experts. Some other points also emerged from the discussion. In this regard representative of UN Women referred to the initiative of "women situation rooms" which have been established in the past few years in certain countries during the electoral process and noted the need for more deeply analyzing the impact of this initiative. IRI also mentioned its Women Democracy Network, offering peer-to-peer training and online resources.

Session Three: The role of international Observers in Supporting Credible Citizen Observation

The third session of the event, moderated by Ms. Annette Fath-Lihic from International IDEA, provided an opportunity for participants to share views and experiences on how best international observers could support citizen observation groups. After watching a short video in which the UN Secretary- General stressed the importance of the role of civil society in consolidating democracy and describing CSOs as "the oxygen of democracy", the panel discussion on the above subject was opened.

Mr. Damaso Magbual of ANFREL described the work of his organization as a regional adaptation and operationalization of the DoP principles. Noting that DoP standards were under threat, he highlighted some Asian initiatives to make the standards and principles locally relevant. The Bangkok Declaration identifies the benchmarks to holding credible elections. It does not set new principles, but rather reaffirms existing ones found in other instruments while emphasizing issues relevant in Asia. These include the independence of election management bodies, the importance of dealing with 'constitutional' as well as 'judicial coups' and electoral violence. Related to the Declaration, the Call to Action led to the establishment of an Asian Electoral Stakeholders Forum, with its nine commissioners. It is similar to the DoP community, but involves all electoral stakeholders, promoting fellowship and interaction among civil society organizations, media, commissioners, etc. The Asian Resource Center draws on resources publicized elsewhere, but focuses on Asia. A Pool of Experts, with database, is being developed. ANFREL also built capacities beyond its members, with workshops and trainings on writing reports and media, such as recent editors' forums in Myanmar.

Mr. Nicolae Panfil of Promo-Lex Association listed some challenges faced by citizens' groups observing elections. Political partisanship remains a permanent challenge, and respect for DoP and advocacy for its principles therefore stay essential. Elections are often perceived as short to mid-term events. This determines the availability of resources as well, with limits on capacities to follow-up on recommendations in between these short-term events. Credibility of citizens' observation, beyond partisanship, is also an issue, with defamation often portraying those groups as 'foreign agents'. He called on international observers to add in their reports comments on the situation of national observers. Technical and organizational capacities are sometimes limited, and tasks such as parallel vote tabulation may be impossible. Politicians and officials may resist, including the follow up for implementation of recommendations. Monitoring election-related rights in conflict zones is difficult. Monitoring of campaign financing requires access and means sometimes beyond the means of national observer groups. IT and recent technologies have many benefits and many observer groups already use online platforms to engage citizens and collect data. There are however security risks associated with such technologies that need to be assessed and considered. Politically motivated 'fake observation' is not a rare phenomenon, encouraged by certain states. At times, it even obtains support from international observer groups. Another challenge is the pressure and harassment on citizen observers that does manage to shut voices.

Mr. Michael McNulty of NDI emphasized the value of collaboration with citizen election observer groups for international observers. They provide additional verification, local resources and deeper analyses. Electoral integrity goes beyond transparency to enhance inclusiveness and participation, which are both boosted when civil society observers engage. Also human rights defenders' work very much relates to election related work too. He also noted that promoting robust citizen observation promotes electoral integrity and broadens governance processes. Mr. McNulty concluded by pointing to the shared goals and shared principles, as listed in the Declaration of Global Principles for Nonpartisan Election Monitoring and Observation by Citizen Organizations (DOGPO).

Session Four: Elections and conflicts

This session, which was moderated by Mr. Pietro Ducci from the European Parliament, discussed various aspects of the important issue of elections and conflict and how best observations missions and international electoral assistance providers can help in mitigating potentials for violence. Ms. Ilona Tip of EISA referred to election observation as a conflict prevention tool, while noting that if elections are key to democratic governance, they are also sometimes conflictual events. Election-related violence in turn can undermine the legitimacy of an election. In this context, election observation missions are sometimes given multiple roles by the intergovernmental bodies that send them, with the head of an observation mission sometimes also tasked with a mediation role.

Election observation helps prevent conflict as it provides credibility to the process, and thereby to the elected authority, and also boosts public confidence. As observers gather information, they also help detect potential sources of tensions, and may feed into early warning systems. But election observation can also instigate conflict, as it raises issues and thereby fuels arguments.

Mediation and observation are complementary, when diplomacy combines with the assessment of an election. This indicates the importance of careful selection of heads of missions.

Mr. Khabele Matlosa, of the AU, noted that electoral violence was a major threat to democratization and peacebuilding in Africa. In Kenya in 2007, 1500 people were killed, 500,000 were displaced, and 100,000 fled the country. The violence caused an economic decline, and also opened a breeding ground for terrorists. The recovery was long and costly. The 2010 report of the AU Panel of the Wise ‘Election-Related Disputes and Political Violence, Strengthening the Role of the African Union in Preventing, Managing, and Resolving Conflict’ therefore recommends investing in prevention.

The report also identifies structural root causes, which are amplified during the period of electoral competition. These include weak institutions and ‘big man politics’; mismanagement of socio-economic and politico-economic diversity; poverty and inequality; the state being the main employer, thereby raising highly political stakes and poor economic situation. Potential electoral triggers are found in all pre-electoral, electoral and post-electoral phases.

Highlighting recent experiences, the AU supported Burundi with the good offices of the AU Chairperson, and decided to replace an election observation mission with human rights observers and military experts instead. The AU is currently beefing up its normative framework, with the development of guidelines on electoral observation in post conflict and transitional elections, and also guidelines on democratic and consensual constitutional amendments.

Mr. Emanuele Giaufret, of the EU/EEAS, noted the increasing number of election observation missions in conflict-prone countries. He then distinguished post-conflict from ‘normal’ contexts where some root causes may at times trigger political or electoral violence. He referred to the distinction between various situations mentioning the examples of Kenya (where elections triggered violence) on the one hand, and the Central African Republic on the other (where elections are seen as an attempt to move out of a conflict situation). He noted that it is precisely in those fragile situations that election observation missions are most useful. However, the standard methodology may not be adequate. Election observation is a civilian activity, which may not be feasible in conflict contexts. Deployment in conflict areas has additional costs, with regards to security in particular.

Even if there is no magic solution, some ideas can be considered. Election observation brings visibility to any situation. Expectations should however be managed, as election observation cannot solve a situation and may even create expectations for strong international positions. The format of a mission may also need to be rethought, so as to maintain the credibility of observation missions. Initiatives and tools parallel to election observation should also be considered, such as high-level mediation missions. Deploying in such settings require early planning and tailor-made approaches, with in particular conflict awareness to be included as part of pre-departure training to observers. Coordination with providers of electoral technical assistance is even more necessary. Additionally, in such situations public statements and communication must be made very carefully.

Mr. Martin Kasirye, of the Commonwealth Secretariat, said he shared the main points presented by the other panelists. He outlined the types of issues that give rise to electoral disputes and conflicts, noting that prevention is better than cure, particularly in relation to electoral conflict. He added that past performance of an EMB was not necessarily an indicator of future performance, as was demonstrated in the Kenyan elections of 2007. He noted the Commonwealth's work in early and preventive engagement and its differing entry points to support member states in conducting fair, credible and inclusive elections, including through targeted capacity building. The example of mediation and negotiating training for EMBs held in Durban in February 2014, was cited. He also noted that the Commonwealth Electoral Network (CEN) was an additional mechanism for experience sharing, support, and promotion of best electoral practice. The role, added value and limitations of international EOMs in conflict situations, including possible good offices roles for the leaders of EOMs, was also discussed.

In addition, Mr. Kasirye noted the role of the Commonwealth Secretary-General's Good Offices. He stressed the importance of collaboration and cooperation in the provision of electoral support, assistance and observation, particularly in conflict situations. Coordination among international election observers was now being institutionalised, and is vital before, during and after elections, as is coordination with citizen observers and other stakeholders. The Commonwealth Secretariat regularly invites leaders of citizen observer groups to join its observation missions in other countries, in order to link them with counterparts and build their capacities. Mr. Kasirye offered some operational conclusions on EOMs planning to operate in conflict and post-conflict countries, and noted the need for sensitivity, tact, careful preparation, research, coordination, collaboration and planning for the pre-electoral, electoral and post electoral phases.

Questions from participants, following the above presentations, were among others related to the experiences of panelists with regards to spontaneous, unexpected reactions from people, including street protests. The OAS differentiated between crime in electoral processes, such as abuse on voters' lists, and violence that affect the election, possibly in the whole country, maybe at the regional, sub-regional or municipality level. In such cases, what is the threshold of violence that delegitimizes an election? And how to measure it? NDI noted that discussions on this topic had improved over the years, and asked how this could feed into preparations for an election observation mission, with regard to the mission leadership and also the overall mission planning. Regular consultation and coordination with peacebuilding actors and also with diplomats and mediators was strongly recommended to election observation missions.

Responding to the questions, Mr. Matlosa noted that context determines whether observers will also play a mediation role. With regards to planning for the 2016 elections, identification of hot spots needs to start already, and inform relevant mission planning. This should be coordinated with other election observation organizations and actors, for joint stock taking on hot spot identification, discussion on approaches and liaison with local and international interlocutors, including peace operations and human rights actors.

Ms. Tip recommended careful consideration for the roles of observers and mediators, with only the top level of a mission engaging in mediation if relevant and necessary. She also recalled that no election is completely flawless, and what matters is people's acceptance of the results.

Mr. Giaufret confirmed that only top leaders of an election observation could possibly engage in activities supporting mediation. Yet it is important that all long-term observers are aware of and able to relate to the conflict, at least know enough of it and not to do any harm and adequately report to the senior leadership.

In some questions from the floor, it was asked how to consider those who pressure for more diplomatic messaging from election observation missions, in order to preserve peace. It was also noted that elections are only triggers for violence, and in that regard, the need to adopt a methodology that prevents election observation from becoming a catalyst for violence was highlighted. Non-deployment was also considered a very strong statement. With regards to the principle of subsidiarity, EISA asked what role could the AU have, with regards to the subregional organizations. Should they be seen as mediators while the AU observes? Important disparities in capacities between ECOWAS, SADC, and EAC were highlighted.

With regards to the trade-off between preserving peace and making objective comments on the democratic character of an election, Mr. Matlosa recalled that the AU is developing guidelines on transitional elections. To EISA's question on subsidiarity, he explained that it was not possible to disaggregate roles, but that coordination was possible, as illustrated in Guinea and Lesotho. It was indeed acknowledged that EAC lacked a strong normative framework.

Closing remarks:

In closing remarks, Mr. Craig Jenness of DPA/EAD recalled that the DoP was a voluntary initiative of 22 parties initially. There are now 52 endorsing organizations and all invest in discussing difficult issues with respect to every organization's realities and institutional limitations. He also thanked all the participants in the meeting.

Mr. Denis Kadima, of EISA, confirmed EISA's willingness to host next year's implementation meeting, and noted that as it enters its second decade, DoP was here to stay. The next meeting will be in Johannesburg, with a focus on campaign finance.