

DECLARATION BY DOMESTIC ELECTION OBSERVERS
CIO SEMINAR ON ELECTION-RELATED ISSUES
VIENNA (21 – 22 JULY 2008)

We, a group of like-minded domestic election observers, believe that transparency, accountability and credibility are the most important cornerstones of democratic elections. They provide for establishing public confidence, including confidence of electoral competitors. Our work in terms of scrutiny of, and support to, electoral processes significantly contributes to the promotion of democracy and the protection of basic human rights.

Our governments committed themselves to ensure our right to associate. This includes the right to form, join and participate effectively in non-governmental organizations that seek the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to cooperate with similar groups and international organizations. They also committed themselves to invite observers, both international and domestic, who enjoy the same rights. In this regard, it is our right to receive voluntary financial contributions from both national and international sources. In return, we pledge ourselves to use the funds in an open and transparent manner. As with international observers, we also enjoy the right and opportunity to observe our elections.

We pledge ourselves to observe electoral processes impartially and objectively and to transparently present our findings. When we identify shortcomings, we report on them in good faith to strengthen the election process in our countries and also to offer assistance in implementing remedies. Some countries, however, not willing to hear uncomfortable truths, continue to deny observed shortcomings and lack of implementation related to their OSCE commitments.

It is indeed regrettable that almost two decades after the Copenhagen Document was adopted, we continue to face immense challenges to our work in some countries, such as systematic intimidation and harassment of our activists, problems with receiving appropriate credentials for election observation in a sufficient period of time prior to elections, or, most recently, even de-registration. Some of us are constantly denied effective access to all stages of the electoral process and domestic legal provisions do not ensure that our rights are completely unhindered and unrestricted. It is the obligation of our governments to protect us.

We thus call on all OSCE participating States to respect civil and political rights, consistent with their obligations and commitments under international law. We call on our governments to fully implement OSCE commitments for democratic elections, in particular to guarantee the right to observe all phases of the electoral process.

Signed,

It`s Your Choice, Armenia	MEMO 98, Slovakia
Election Monitoring Center (EMC), Azerbaijan	Golos Coalition, Russia
Asociatia Pro Democratia (APD), Romania	MOST Citizens' Association,
Republican Network of Independent Monitors, Kazakhstan	Macedonia
Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society, Kyrgyzstan	Gong, Croatia
Centre for Democratic Transition, Montenegro	
Centre for Free Elections and Democracy (CESID), Serbia	
Committee of Voters of Ukraine (CVU), Ukraine	
Belarusian Helsinki Committee, Belarus	
International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED), Georgia	