

## Agenda

### Wednesday, 20 November, 2024

**14:00 - 15:15**      **High Level Panel: Leadership in Times of Democratic Transition**

**Speakers:**      **Lech Wałęsa**, Former President of Poland  
                         **Speciosa Wandira**, Former Vice-President of Uganda

**15:15 - 15:45**      **Official Opening**

**Speakers:**      **Piotr Borawski**, Vice-Mayor of Gdańsk  
                         **Meaghan Fitzgerald**, Head of ODIHR Election Department

15:45 - 16:15      *Coffee Break and Group Photo*

**16:15 - 18:00**      **Session 1: Electoral Management Bodies and Global Democracy Crises:  
Observing New Challenges and EMB Responses**

The fate of democracy closely relates to the fate of elections. In turn, the fate of elections depends on a professional, neutral, and efficient administrations. Global indices and indicators from organizations, such as V-Dem and Freedom House, point to problems in election administration as a main driver of low democratic scores. Freedom House highlighted in its most recent report that elections are driving the deteriorations in their rights and freedoms measurements, while V-Dem noted in its last Clean Election Report that their EMB Autonomy measure fell considerably in 42 countries in the last decade.

As noted above, election management bodies (EMBs) play a key role in ensuring credible electoral processes that adhere to international standards and promote public trust. Despite this important role, EMBs face several challenges including lack of public confidence, political pressure, and constrained resources. New and emerging issues linked to the changing landscape in which elections are conducted globally also add to the challenges that EMBs face in fulfilling their mandates. The neutrality of EMBs is often called into question in the face of extreme political polarization, as political actors target them to undermine the integrity of

elections. In addition, issues like cybersecurity, mis/disinformation, the use of technologies among others increasingly present complexities for the integrity and management of elections.

In this context, EMBs have devised creative ways to address emergent challenges. In addition to commissioning specialized teams to manage their presence and communications online and in social media, EMBs have also forged partnerships and collaborations with internet providers, technology companies (e.g. operators of social media platforms), civil society groups and others to address dis/misinformation and the new information environment. These innovations and others geared towards reinforcing the institutional and operational autonomy of EMBs have become integral aspects of electoral processes assessed and analyzed by election observers.

The panel will discuss EMB responses and adaptations to the changing landscape of elections. This includes the challenges that EMBs face, and innovations and good practices that can manage these challenges effectively. The discussion will also focus how election observers should evaluate EMB innovations and the level of preparedness of election observation missions to undertake such evaluation.

Key questions for discussion:

- What are the new challenges EMBs are facing, in areas such as cybersecurity, combating disinformation, and political pressure stemming from political polarization?
- How do these challenges translate into new activities that EMB must undertake to ensure a clean electoral process, such as monitoring, mediation, regulation, management, and sanctioning?
- To what extent do these challenges require legal and administrative innovation, including institutional reforms, the creation of specialized units or task forces, and strategic planning?
- How can electoral observers be prepared to assess EMB innovations and adaptations in response to these emerging challenges?
- Is it feasible for observers to evaluate EMB autonomy in the light of innovations, planning, and strategies developed to handle these new challenges?
- What are some best practices for addressing the new challenges that EMB face?

**Moderator:** **Obehi Okojie**, Senior Program Associate, The Carter Center

**Speakers:** **Professor Attahiru Muhammadu Jega**, Former Chair, Independent National Electoral Commission of Nigeria

**Dr. Irena Hadžiabdić**, President, Central Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina

**McDonald Governor Chipenzi**, Commissioner, Electoral Commission of Zambia  
**Nadège Carine Domjje**, Political and Electoral Affairs Officer, United Nations  
Electoral Assistance Division

19:30                      *Reception at the Artus Court (Museum of the City of Gdańsk)*  
*Photo Exhibition*

## Thursday, 21 November, 2024

### **09:30 - 11:15      Session 2: Improving Public Understanding of Our Observation Work and Communicating Complicated Messages**

By providing an interview-style exchange between a prominent international journalist with various representatives of organizations conducting international election observation, this session aims to share, from a journalistic perspective, how International Election Observation Missions (IEOMs) can communicate effectively throughout the electoral process, including on communicating who we are, what our role is, and the findings of our missions.

The session seeks to help improve IEOMs' engagement with the media in order to ensure that observer findings are accurately covered by the media, including reporting on all aspects of the electoral process as reflected in observer reports. The session should also explore ideas on how to engage the media effectively between election cycles, so as to encourage momentum in focusing on key recommendations proposed by IEOMs.

Through this discussion we should gain:

- a better understanding of what journalists need from observers and how that can be provided with the limitations we face;
- an appreciation of the journalistic perspective on the frameworks we operate in;
- and a mutual understanding of why we may need to communicate our findings in the ways we do.

**Moderator:** **Alan Kasujja**, Journalist, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)

**Speakers:** **Neal Mac Call**, Head of Division, Democracy and Electoral Observation,  
European External Action Service

**Charmaine Wright**, Head of Media Relations at the Commonwealth Secretariat  
**Meaghan Fitzgerald**, Head of ODIHR Election Department

11:15 - 11:30      *Coffee Break*

**11:30 - 13:00      Session 3: Strengthening DoP Engagement in the post-election period**

Election observation is most effective and impactful when sufficient momentum is maintained in the post-election period for the review and implementation of observer recommendations by national stakeholders. In many cases, multiple DoP missions will have observed the same election, each producing their own set of recommendations. Even where DoP organisations have not observed, they may still have plans to support stakeholders in the succeeding electoral cycle.

There is therefore a need for DoP organisations to work closely in the post-election period for three reasons: firstly, in order for the DoP's collective voice to help sustain momentum and demonstrate support to national stakeholders in the post-election period; secondly, in order to ensure co-ordination on the provision of technical assistance; and thirdly, to exchange lessons learned that can feed into the cycle of continuous refinement of observer methodology. While the DoP community has, on many occasions, worked well together on the ground during the period of deployment, this collaboration has not been as strong in the post-election period.

This session will focus on what strategies could be developed to enhance the DoP community's level of post-election co-operation. The session will explore issues such as how to enhance cooperation on encouraging and supporting post-election multistakeholder reviews (including reviews of observer recommendations); strengthening collaboration/sharing experiences on post-election follow-ups; exploring joint technical support where possible to avoid duplication of efforts; and sharing experiences on tracking the status of implementation of observer recommendations.

Questions:

- What is each organisation's approach to engaging national stakeholders in the post-election period, including on the provision of technical assistance? Are there differences or commonalities in each organisations' methodology (or terms of

engagement with national stakeholders) that might help or hinder greater coordination amongst DoP organisations in the future?

- What, if any, have been the main impediments to co-operation in the post-election period, and how might these be addressed?
- Do DoP organisations take an active approach to encouraging post-election reviews? To what extent do DoP organisations attempt to cultivate political will, where such will is lacking?
- Have any DoP organisations faced challenges in the tracking of the implementation of recommendations between election cycles? If such challenges have been resolved, what strategies were employed?
- What are the next steps? How can we take the conversation forward realistically to collaborate in more meaningful and impactful ways in post-election periods?

**Moderator:** **Linford Andrews**, Adviser and Head of Electoral Support, Commonwealth Secretariat

**Speakers:** **Ambassador Calixte Aristide Mbari**, Head of Democracy, Elections and Constitutionalism Division, African Union

**Riccardo Chelleri**, Senior Election Expert, European External Action Service

**Hannah Roberts**, Independent Election Expert

13:00 - 14:00 *Lunch*

**14:00 - 15:45      Session 4: Observer Rights and the Impact of Intimidation and Obstruction**

Globally, the conditions for conducting democratic elections have become increasingly challenging. Disinformation campaigns, harsh rhetoric, and violence now threaten a wide range of stakeholders involved in electoral processes, including candidates, political parties, election officials, and observers. These challenges undermine the foundations of democracy and hinder the ability of observers to perform their essential roles. In 2023, the DoP addressed the pressing topic of “Challenges of observers during elections: How to navigate a new electoral landscape”. This discussion highlighted various impediments faced by electoral observers, including rising polarization, rampant disinformation, and escalating violence- all reflecting a broader global decline in democratic norms.

Member organizations of the DoP have noted deliberate efforts by various actors, including state authorities, to undermine, discredit, intimidate and directly harm those who support democracy and human rights through their work in national and international election observation. Among these challenges, violence poses an immediate and severe threat to both national and international electoral observers. Numerous reports have documented instances of observers facing harassment, intimidation, arrest, and in the most tragic cases, even losing their lives. The escalating violence and lack of protections lead to the recognition of election observers as specialized human rights defenders by the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights Defenders, IACHR, EU and ODIHR. This recognition ensures that both national and international observers receive the protections afforded to all human rights defenders.

A fundamental responsibility of electoral observation missions and organizations is to safeguard the lives and well-being of their personnel. In response to escalating violence in certain member states, OAS Missions have been compelled to limit observer deployment to established safe zones and implement complex security protocols. In 2023, some observers were even required to wear bulletproof vests. These heightened security measures not only incur significant financial costs but also take a toll on the emotional and psychological well-being of observers, far exceeding typical expectations for electoral missions.

Election observers have also experienced rampant intimidation and obstruction while fulfilling their duties. They have been denied accreditation or subjected to burdensome accreditation requirements. Additionally, many have experienced harassment and intimidated from police and other state authorities, subjected to unfounded accusations by high government authorities, and expelled from the host country altogether. Observers have been victims of defamation, false accusations, and infringements on their right to free movement. Coupled with rising violence against observers, these actions are designed to obstruct and intimidate them, undermining the integrity of the electoral process.

This panel aims to examine the experiences of election observation organizations that have encountered intimidation, obstruction and even violence during electoral processes. It will explore viable strategies for mitigating and resolving the impact of these phenomena on the work of observers, along with supporting the physical and mental integrity of observers who must operate in environments characterized by violence and insecurity. By sharing insights and

best practices, the panel seeks to enhance the resilience of electoral observers and uphold the fundamental principles of democratic governance.

Members of the DoP community may wish to discuss and share:

- The experiences of non-partisan citizen and international observers when encountering intimidation and obstruction.
- What steps can be taken to ensure that the rights of all observers are upheld in politically polarized environments?
- What provisions can electoral observation missions request that countries include in their national legal framework to recognize and ensure that the relevant protections are secured for and applied to both non-partisan citizen observers and international observers?

**Moderator:** **Cristina Castagnoli**, Head of Election Observation Unit, European Parliament

**Speakers:** **Nino Dolidze**, Executive Director, International Society for Free Elections

**Gerardo de Icaza**, Director, Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation, Organization of American States

**Oliver Kask**, Substitute Member of the Venice Commission on behalf of Estonia, Justice at the Supreme Court of Estonia

**Nacho Sanchez Amor**, Member of the European Parliament, Member of the Democracy Support and Election coordination group

16:00 - 18:00 *European Solidarity Center visit (Guided Tours begin at 16:00)*

## Friday, 22 November, 2024

**09:30 - 11:00** **Session 5: New Tools for Election Observation – presentations from endorsers**

The session will seek to draw, from election observation experiences across the globe, a sense of the innovations that are defining how elections are being observed. The term “tools”, in relation to the 2024 Annual Implementing Meeting, shall loosely refer to approaches, systems, software or as indicated earlier, innovations that have been introduced and are being used to



respond to emerging challenges, to improve efficiency in election observation, and to enhance the effectiveness of our engagement with election processes. The session will also seek to facilitate information-sharing and peer-learning among participants of the Annual Meeting.

**Moderator:** **Ambassador Calixte Aristide Mbari**, Head of Democracy, Elections and Constitutionalism Division, African Union

**Presentations:**

**"Interrogating Party-led Manipulation in Elections"**

**Jessica Keegan**, Senior Advisor for Electoral Integrity, International Republican Institute

**Parliamentary "Network of Election Observers"**

**Lord Blencathra**, Chair Designate, Network of Election Observers, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

**"Encouraging Follow-up to Recommendations with Good Practice"**

**Ambassador Urszula Gacek**, Election-Watch.EU

**"Media Monitoring System: EMS"**

**Amirouche Nedjaa**, European Centre for Electoral Support

**"A Manual for OAS Electoral Observation Missions: 2024 Edition"**

**Brenda Santamaria**, Section Chief for Election Observation, Organization of American States

**Handbook: "Observation of Information and Communication Technologies in Elections"**

**Vladimir Misev**, Senior Adviser on New Voting Technologies, ODIHR

**"Model Commitments for Advancing Genuine and Credible Elections"**

**The Carter Center / National Democratic Institute**

11:00 - 11:15      *Coffee Break*



**11:15 - 12:15      Session 6: Inclusive Election Observation Missions – a look at enabling greater participation of persons with disabilities in our observation activities**

The session aims to draw attention to the practical steps that can be taken to facilitate the inclusion and participation of persons with various types of disabilities in the work of election observation activities, with concrete examples from recent EOAs of international organizations.

This session will entail a reflection on the limitations and shortcomings of current practices in existing election observation frameworks (including ODIHR's) which prevent the participation of persons with various types of disabilities to contribute as election observers, particularly individuals with physical or sensory impairments; a discussion on how to improve the accessibility of observation missions from the operational and methodological perspectives, including election-day and long-term observation activities, and how to achieve these improvements; as well as a presentation of case studies/examples of good practices for inclusiveness of observation missions for persons with various types of disabilities. ODIHR will present a study it commissioned on the accessibility of its election observation missions that aimed at identifying concrete steps that we can take to ensure our missions are more accessible for all and therefore more inclusive. We would also hear the perspective of States that identify and hire observers for missions with international organizations on the factors they must consider in the selection and deployment processes.

**Moderator:** **Meaghan Fitzgerald**, Head of Election Department, ODIHR

**Speakers:** **Lord Blencathra**, Chair designate, Network of Election Observers, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

**Helga Stevens**, former Member of European Parliament, Head of the ODIHR Election Assessment Mission to the United Kingdom

**Ranko Vukčević**, Election Expert and author of the report on the accessibility of ODIHR missions

**Anne Sofie Molandsveen**, Thematic Manager Democracy and Elections, Norwegian Refugee Council NORCAP

12:15 - 13:15      *Lunch*

### **13:15 - 14:45      Session 7: Generative Artificial Intelligence and Elections**

Over the past years, artificial intelligence (AI) has demonstrated its importance and potential ability to influence elections. The rapid expansion of generative AI (genAI) in particular holds promise for enhancing the legitimacy of elections. GenAI refers to a class of artificial intelligence techniques and models that creates new, original content - such as text, images or videos -- based on data on which the models were trained. From optimizing campaign strategies through predictive analytics to enhancing voter engagement via personalized outreach, genAI has the potential to modernize election administration tasks, improve accessibility, and strengthen election security measures. In relation to electoral observation and electoral assistance, genAI carries the potential of enabling the automated analysis of vast amounts of electoral data, detecting irregularities, identifying patterns indicative of fraud or manipulation, and contributing to efforts aimed at addressing such challenges. Additionally, genAI-powered tools can facilitate the analysis of social media activity, image and video content, and other digital sources to detect disinformation campaigns and mitigate their impact on voter perception and behavior.

The spread of genAI in elections is also associated with serious risks but global governance remains weak. GenAI raises concerns regarding consensus, information integrity, privacy, fairness, model bias, and the potential for manipulation of elections. Despite the adoption of the United Nations' 2024 Global Digital Compact and more specific relevant regional AI policies and legal frameworks (AU's 2024 Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy, EU's 2018 Coordinated Plan for Artificial Intelligence and EU's 2024 AI Act, etc.), there isn't an international legal framework solely dedicated to the use of artificial intelligence in elections. Several other international agreements and conventions indirectly address related issues, such as privacy, data protection, human rights, and electoral integrity, which are relevant to the use of genAI in electoral processes but remain insufficient to ensure greater accountability. In addition, genAI models - including how they are trained, how they are used in electoral processes and who is responsible and accountable for their content - can be opaque and difficult to observe.

In the face of the above pitfalls and obstacles, some electoral observation organizations have taken some measures, but many of them are yet to be sufficiently equipped to fully grasp and observe the challenges posed by genAI to the integrity of electoral processes and their impact on electoral observation. This suggests that electoral observation methodology and tools,

observers' strategic communication, partnerships (including with social media companies), observers training as well as financial and human resources may need to be revisited to consider the AI dimension of electoral processes and its impact on electoral observation.

Balancing the benefits of genAI-driven efficiencies with the imperative to safeguard electoral integrity necessitates robust consultative and regulatory frameworks, transparency measures, and oversight to ensure that genAI technologies serve to enhance democratic processes while upholding fundamental principles of consensus, fairness, transparency, and accountability. If elections are to be peaceful and credible, the use of genAI in elections as well as the observation thereof, requires careful consideration of issues such as political buy in, policies and legal frameworks, algorithmic bias, data privacy, transparency, and accountability, to ensure that AI-driven interventions uphold electoral democracies values and respect fundamental rights.

A discussion around AI, elections and electoral observation would greatly benefit the DoP community by contributing to a common understanding of opportunities and challenges surrounding the use of AI in elections, their impact on electoral observation and what could be done about it. This panel will, therefore, seek to explore these issues and make appropriate recommendations in this connection.

Key questions for discussion:

- What is the impact of genAI on elections so far? In the first year of genAI in elections, is what we're seeing what we expected the impact and usage to be? What are the challenges it poses to electoral observation? Are they different in the short and long term?
- What strategies could observers use to address the impact of genAI on electoral observation? Does our experience with social media in elections offer lessons? To what extent do these challenges require methodological changes to observe the use of AI in elections?
- AI is a tool. How could observers potentially use/integrate AI in their work to address a need that can't be addressed using a different tool? And which AI tools should be considered? What are the potential downsides of the election observation community using AI tools? How to balance the use of AI in electoral observation and the potential downsides associated with it?

- What policies and ethical standards need to be in place to govern the use of AI in electoral observation? To what extent might regulatory interventions impact the ability of election observers to more effectively observe genAI in elections? What is the gap between what is needed and what is possible, and how can our community prepare to navigate these gaps in the regulatory framework?

**Moderator:** **Nadège Carine Domjie**, Political and Electoral Affairs Officer, United Nations Electoral Assistance Division

**Speakers:** **Armin Rabitsch**, Chairperson, Election-Watch.EU

**Ingo Boltz**, Expert on Artificial Intelligence, The Carter Center

**Julia Brothers**, Deputy Director for Elections, National Democratic Institute

**Osama Aljaber**, Digital Democracy Specialist, United Nations Development Programme

**14:45 - 15:15 Closing Remarks and Looking Ahead**

ODIHR Election Department

United Nations Electoral Assistance Division