Joint Press Statement on the 20th Anniversary Implementation Meeting of the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation (DoP)

December 12, 2025 – Geneva, Switzerland

The Endorsing Organizations of the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation (DoP) held their Twentieth (20th) Anniversary Implementation Meeting in Geneva, Switzerland on December 10 to 12, 2025 to deliberate on and reaffirm their commitment to supporting genuine democratic elections and to the principles for international election observation as set forth in the DoP.

The Endorsing Organizations recalled that 2025 is the 20th Anniversary of Declaration of Principle's launching at the United Nations Secretariat. Since its adoption, the number of organizations endorsing the document has grown from 21 to 54 - with endorsing organizations in every region of the world.

The meeting brought together intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations to review two decades of collective experience and how to address evolving challenges facing the current electoral landscape. It also provided an important opportunity for the community to reflect on shared achievements and reaffirm its commitment to credible, impartial, independent and professional international election observation. Through a series of high-level exchanges and thematic sessions, endorsers examined the impact of digital threats and disinformation, rising political polarization, high-risk security environments, and increasing resource and operational constraints. Participants also shared new tools and methodologies aimed at strengthening cooperation and enhancing the effectiveness of election observation missions.

As part of their deliberations, the Endorsing Organizations recalled United Nations General Assembly resolutions, including most recently in its resolution (A/RES/78/208), expressing "appreciation for the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers, which elaborate guidelines for international electoral observation."

The Endorsing Organizations also noted the public statement of United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association and the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders recognizing that "election observers are human rights defenders."

In accordance with the Declaration of Principles, the Endorsing Organizations highlighted that international observation:

- "expresses the interest of the international community in the achievement of democratic elections" (DoP page 1, paragraph 4);

- “is conducted for the benefit of the citizens of the country holding the election” as “it is the people of a country who ultimately determine credibility and legitimacy of an election process” (DoP page 1, paragraph 4 and Article 6);
- “has become widely accepted around the world and plays an important role in providing accurate and impartial assessments about the nature of electoral processes” (DoP page 2, paragraph 2);
- “can promote public confidence, as warranted, promote electoral participation and mitigate the potential for election-related conflict” (DoP page 2, paragraph 1); and
- “has the potential to enhance the integrity of election processes, by deterring and exposing irregularities and fraud and by providing recommendations for improving electoral processes” (DoP page 2, paragraph 1).

As specified in the Declaration of Principles, the Endorsing Organizations noted:

- “The will of the people of a country is the basis for authority of government, and that will must be determined through periodic genuine democratic elections” (DoP Article 3).
- “Genuine democratic elections cannot be achieved unless a wide range of other human rights and fundamental freedoms can be exercised on an ongoing basis without discrimination” (DoP page 1, paragraph 3).
- “Genuine democratic elections are a requisite condition for democratic governance” (DoP page 1, paragraph 2).

As such on the 20th Anniversary of the Declaration of Principles, **the Endorsing Organizations reaffirmed their commitment to the principles of international election observation**, including:

1) "International election observation is: the systematic, comprehensive and accurate gathering of information concerning laws, processes and institutions related to the conduct of elections and other factors concerning the overall electoral environment; the impartial and professional analysis of such information; and the drawing of conclusion about the character of electoral processes based on the highest standards of accuracy of information and impartiality of analysis” (DoP Article 4).
2) “It is process oriented, not concerned with any particular electoral result, and is concerned with results only to the degree that they are reported honestly and accurately in a transparent and timely manner.” (DoP Article 6).
3) It “is expected to issue timely, accurate and impartial statements to the public (including providing copies to electoral authorities and other appropriate national entities” (DoP Article 7).
4) It “should, when possible, offer recommendations for improving the integrity and effectiveness of electoral and related processes” (DoP Article 4).
5) It “must be conducted with respect for the sovereignty of the country holding elections and with respect for the human rights of the people of the country” (DoP Article 9).

Further, **the Endorsing Organizations reaffirmed their commitment to conducting international election observation missions in accordance with the Declaration of Principles**, including:

1) "Must actively seek cooperation with host country electoral authorities and must not obstruct the process" (DoP Article 10).
2) "Must "be of sufficient size to determine independently and impartially the character of an election processes in a country and must be of sufficient duration to determine the character of all the critical elements of the election process in the pre-election, election-day and post-election periods" (DoP Article 19).
3) "Not to isolate or over-emphasize election day observations, and that such observations must be placed into the context of the overall electoral process" (DoP Article 19).
4) "Should identify, establish regular communications with and cooperate as appropriate with credible domestic nonpartisan election monitoring organizations" and "should advocate for the right of citizens to conduct domestic nonpartisan election monitoring without undue restrictions or interference" (DoP Articles 16 and 17).
5) Should "recognize importance of balanced gender diversity in the composition of participants and leadership of international election observation missions, as well as diversity of citizenship in such missions" (DoP Article 20).
6) "Stand-alone, specialized observation missions may also be employed, as long as such missions make clear public statements that their activities and conclusions are limited in scope and that they draw no conclusion about the overall election process based on such limited activities" (DoP Article 5).

On behalf of the Endorsing Organizations, the Convening Committee shares this Joint Press Statement on the Twentieth Anniversary Implementation Meeting of the Declaration of Principles for International Observation held in Geneva, Switzerland, from December 10 to 12, 2025, and hosted by the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division.

List of Declaration of Principles Convening Committee Organizations:

African Union (AU)

Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL)

The Carter Center

Commonwealth Secretariat

Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA)

European Union (EU)

National Democratic Institute (NDI)

Organization of American States General Secretariat (OAS)

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR)

United Nations Secretariat