**PRESS RELEASE**

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**BELARUS**

**“FREE AND FAIR” ELECTIONS**

**ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSIONS**

With fptp parliamentary elections and a two-round system of presidential elections, in which the first round is also fptp, would Belarus enjoy a healthier democracy if international election observation missions critiqued, where necessary, the electoral system?

They don’t. So a Mission may well conclude that a first-past-the-post fptp election, which is invariably unfair, as nevertheless “free and fair.”

When the osce *organises* elections, as for example in Bosnia in 1996 or Kosova in 2001, it favours a system of pr. But when it only *observes*, it says little on the electoral system itself; it reports, and reports wisely, but only about everything else. Why the silence? Is it partly because Britain would not like an organization of which it is a member to criticize an electoral system which is British?

NB The OSCE was not invited to observe the recent contest.

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