

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>THE INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR ELECTORAL TRAINING AND RESEARCH</b></p>
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Good morning, distinguished members of the Association of European Electoral Officials for providing us with the opportunity to share with you an initiative dealing with the main subject of the conference: professional education of electoral actors.

My presentation will be focus on a crucial issue for electoral administration, which is the training of people responsible for organizing elections: electoral officials as decision makers.

Please allow me to expand on the strategic importance of the training for decision makers in the area of electoral organization. Why is their training so important?

1. The world suffered amazing transformations since the 1970s, regarding the enlargement of political freedom and the widening of political systems, in order to accommodate the growing and complex political plurality of contemporary society.

From 1973 to 2003, 93 countries became democratic; eight countries did so in the decade of the 70s; 23 countries in the 80s; and 62 countries from 1990 to 2003. Currently, 140 out of the nearly 200 countries of the world regularly hold multiparty elections. The world has become more democratic than ever in history.

However, electoral democracy requires a constant perfecting and updating in order to answer the requirements of a modern society formed by citizens who are aware of their rights, together with strong political parties able to intensely dispute access to political power.

2. In such a context, the organization of elections has gradually become a subject of specialized knowledge and practice. Planning, conduction, surveillance and even dispute resolution related to elections require wide knowledge and a very careful practice, in order to support the principles of legality and legitimacy of political representation.

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3. Nowadays people like us, who are involved in the organization of elections, must face wide and diversified aspects in their daily practice. We must take into account the complexity of the diverse aspects of elections, in order to satisfy international standards universally acknowledged for free, transparent, fair, equitable and trustworthy elections.
4. Classic standards of electoral democracy have not changed, but change is observed in the parameters established in order to satisfy such attributes. Current conditions for the development of electoral competencies require a higher quality in the performance of the electoral authority, so as to comply with universal standards. Therefore, a larger effort for the training of electoral officers is required, according to a new context of political exigencies.
5. The complexity in the organization of elections has progressed parallel to two processes: firstly the growing democratization and consolidation of societies, and secondly the increasing political plurality of society, which is made evident by the presence of strong parties intensely fighting for political power. All this creates the need of new aptitudes (knowledge, skills and abilities), as well as new attitudes (values and behavior) of people responsible for organizing elections throughout the world.
6. The assessment of the electoral agenda in the world has changed significantly, as it now requires new abilities and deeper knowledge on the part of electoral officials.

The conventional agenda demands a periodical review and adjustment in areas such as integration and updating of electoral registries, the training of officials responsible for voting and counting, information campaigns for voters, special attention to vulnerable groups, policies for the acquisition, production and distribution of electoral materials and documentation, and the mechanisms to preserve the secrecy of vote, among others.

In the last decade new dynamics have emerged, and these have been translated into new challenges. The control and surveillance of public and private funding for political parties and campaigns; the regulation of political and electoral advertisement during campaigns, the use of new technologies to cast and count votes; the immediate provision of preliminary results; external voting, and political representation of

expatriates; limits to campaign spending and other mechanisms to guarantee conditions of equity in the contest, and so on.

7. In sum, the administration of elections has become a multifunctional and highly complex discipline. We can identify two areas for the development of the electoral officials:
  - A. The members of the steering bodies of electoral management bodies require tools that will allow them to plan, direct and survey one of the most impressive logistical processes carried out periodically, which requires considerable skills and administrative knowledge.
  - B. The knowledge and political ability for decision making about important technical aspects and the terms of the relation established with different electoral actors, that is, not only citizens, parties and candidates, but also mass media, NGOs, opinion leaders, electoral observers and academics.
8. Accordingly, people responsible for organizing elections require constant updating, both to achieve higher efficiency and to offer a better quality service. The service we provide is called legal and legitimate electoral democracy.

Training, specialization and updating of human resources in electoral management bodies has become a strategic imperative. Training is aimed at improving trust, credibility and legitimacy of electoral processes and their outcome.

9. Being aware of the need existing in the international electoral arena, we are presenting an international answer to this strategic imperative. That is why we are thinking about creating a Center for International Training and Research.

Federal electoral authorities of Mexico, that is, the Federal Electoral Institute and the Federal Electoral Tribunal, working together with the United Nations, started to discuss the design of this Center some time ago. We do not want the Center to be a Mexican initiative; we want it to be an international project, with multinational participation. Clearly in this embryonic stage Mexican electoral management bodies are fostering the project, but we wish to incorporate all of you to the project, since benefits will be available for all as well. We would like you to participate in different forms: as direct partners, programmatic partners or specific areas of interest partners.

## 10. General characteristics of the Center.

- A. The Center was conceived from an integral and multidisciplinary approach. This means that the idea is to articulate efforts on research, training and dissemination of information. The scope for these areas is based on the needs and requirements of electoral management. This will not be a Center with academic or theoretical aspirations. The Center must be able to offer tools and capacities in order to face and solve concrete and daily problems in the organization of elections. Therefore the experience in the organization of elections can offer integral services of training, specialization and updating both for management and technical-operational personnel.
- B. The Center has been conceived as a space where the basic format for training will be workshops and courses to exchange knowledge and experience. The experience in the organization of elections may offer integrated services of training, specialization and updating, both in the management and technical-operational areas.
- C. The Center intends to focus on the political conduction of the different technical aspects of the electoral process. An efficient organization and adequate technical procedures are not enough in order to obtain good results in the organization of elections. A high dose of sensitivity is required, as well as political conduction of the technical aspects. Electoral administrators must face strong pressures from candidates, parties, mass media and public opinion, in very tense and crucial moments, politically speaking. In this sense, by sharing experiences a unique and privileged space for knowledge is created.
- D. The Center will have the following curricular structure. There will be four fundamental areas:
  - Ethical-Institutional.
  - Administrative-Management
  - Juridical-Political
  - Technical-Operational

At the same time, these fundamental areas will be developed in three stages:

- Basic or initial stage, addressed mainly to recently-appointed electoral authorities.

- Professional stage, addressed to electoral authorities which have had a certain amount of experience in the exercise of the administration of elections. This approach will be wider and related to political conduction.
- Specialized stage, aimed at deepening and updating knowledge and abilities related to specific areas of electoral administration.

I would like to invite you to join this international effort. We can build leadership together. The United Nations and the Mexican electoral authorities are only taking the first steps. At the end of this panel, I will be available if any of you would like to speak with me. I would very much like to work with European authorities in order to foster pilot projects, in order to start generating a virtuous cycle that will contribute to improving the quality of electoral service throughout the world.