

Glossary of terms

This glossary defines the use of words within this Handbook. Some words may have specific definitions within the legislation and regulations of a particular country (note particularly in this context *citizenship*, *immigrant*, *naturalization* and *resident*).

Advance voting – The opportunity for *electors* to cast their vote before election day. There are a variety of ways in which this can be done, including *postal voting* and voting at determined *polling sites*.

Asylum seeker – A person whose application for asylum in or recognition as a *refugee* by a country of which he or she is not a citizen is pending, and who claims to fear persecution if returned home.

Attendance voting – See *Personal voting*.

Boundary delimitation – The process by which a country, local authority area or area of a supranational institution is divided into *electoral districts*.

Campaign – The political activity, including meetings, rallies, speeches, demonstrations, parades, other events, and the use of the media, intended to inform the *electorate* of the platform of a particular candidate or political party and to gather support.

Citizenship – The status of being a citizen of a country, which is accompanied by a range of rights and obligations often defined in the constitution or a basic or organic law. Requirements for citizenship vary, and may include being born in a country, having one parent or both parents from that country, or *naturalization*.

Closed list – A form of *List proportional representation* (PR) in which *electors* are restricted to voting only for a party or political grouping, and cannot express a preference for any candidate within a party list. See also *Open list*.

Communal roll – A register of *electors* for which the qualification for registration is a determinable criterion such as religion, ethnicity, language or gender. All *electors* who meet the criterion may be entered in the communal roll automatically, or each such *elector* may be able to choose whether or not to be entered. This register is used for the election of representatives of the group defined by the criterion from *electoral districts* specified for that purpose.

Diaspora – Population of a country who have migrated abroad and keep strong identity ties with the homeland.

Diplomatic mission – A formal representation of a country in another country recognized under the Vienna Convention, for example an embassy, high commission or consulate.

Distance voting – See *Remote voting*.

E-voting – Short form for *electronic voting*. Any method of voting using electronic means. Examples include casting a vote through the Internet, by personal digital assistant (PDA), telephone or mobile phone, or digital television.

Electoral – A person who is both qualified and registered to vote in an election.

Electoral district – One of the geographical areas into which a country, local authority or supranational institution may be divided for electoral purposes. An electoral district may elect one or more representatives to an elected body. See *Multi-member district* and *Single-member district*.

Electoral law – One or more pieces of legislation governing all aspects of the process for electing the political institutions defined in a country's constitution or institutional framework.

Electoral management body (EMB) – The organization tasked under the *electoral law* with responsibility for the conduct of elections. The EMB in most countries consists either of an independent commission appointed for the purpose or of part of a specified government department.

Electoral register – The list of persons registered as qualified to vote.

Electoral regulations – Rules subsidiary to legislation made, often by the *electoral management body*, under powers contained in the *electoral law* which govern aspects of the organization and administration of an election.

Electoral system – That part of the *electoral law* and *regulations* which determines how parties and candidates are elected to a representative body. Its three most significant components are the electoral formula, the ballot structure and the district magnitude.

Electorate – May have one of two distinct meanings: (a) the total number of *electors* registered to vote in an *electoral district*; and (b) a synonym for *electoral district* used predominantly in some anglophone countries. See *Electoral district*.

Electronic voting – See *e-voting*.

Entitlement restrictions – Provisions in the *electoral law* and *regulations* of a country which govern the practical requirements for an *elector* to cast his or her vote. They may be of two types, legal and administrative.

External districts – *Electoral districts* of which the *electorate* is made up of *external electors*, from which representatives are elected to *reserved seats*.

External elector – An *elector* who is registered as *resident* outside his or her country of *citizenship* or otherwise as being not present in his or her country of *citizenship*.

External voting – The inclusion in the *electoral law* and *regulations* of a country of provisions and procedures which enable some or all *electors* of a country who are temporarily or permanently outside the country to exercise their voting rights from outside the territory of the country.

Fax voting – A mechanism of voting in which an *elector* receives and returns the voting material by fax.

Gerrymandering – The deliberate manipulation of *electoral district* boundaries so as to advantage or disadvantage a particular political interest.

Host country – A country that allows *external voting* to take place on its territory by *electors* from another country.

Immigrant – A person who is accepted as a *resident* by a country other than that of his or her *citizenship*.

Intention to return – A specific commitment from a person living outside his or her country of *citizenship* to return to that country within a specified term, in order to ensure the exercise of defined rights.

Internal voting – Voting inside a country which is holding an election.

Internally displaced person (IDP) – A *refugee* within the borders of his or her own country.

List proportional representation (List PR) – An *electoral system* in which each participant party or grouping presents a list of candidates for an *electoral district*, voters vote for a party, and parties receive seats in proportion to their overall share of the vote. Winning

candidates are taken from the lists. List PR systems include *Closed list* and *Open list*.

Migrant worker – A person who migrates abroad with the main purpose of obtaining a wage-earning job, often of a nature not requiring qualifications, and often for the purpose of sending remittances to relatives in the country of *citizenship*.

Multi-member district – An *electoral district* from which more than one representative is elected to a legislature or elected body. See also *Single-member district*.

Multiple citizenship – The possession by a person of the *citizenship*, and consequential political rights and obligations, of more than one country.

Naturalization – The acquisition by an *immigrant* of *citizenship* of the country in which he or she is now *resident*.

Non-refoulement – The principle in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees that ‘No Contracting State shall expel or return (“refouler”) a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion’.

Officer on duty abroad – Any public servant carrying out duties abroad, for example representing his or her government or any regional or international official organization.

Official external polling site – A *diplomatic mission* or other official site of one country, which is holding an election, within another, the *host country*, where a *polling site* is set up.

Open list – A form of *List PR* in which voters can express a preference both for a party or grouping and for one, or sometimes more, candidates within that party or grouping. See also *Closed list*.

Out-of-country voting – See *External voting*.

Permanent resident abroad – A person who has established his or her permanent home in a country other than that of his/her *citizenship* in accordance with the laws of that country.

Personal voting – A mechanism for voting in which an *elector* attends at a *polling station* or *polling site* in person in order to cast his/her vote.

Plurality/majority systems – Plurality/majority *electoral systems* are based on the principle that a candidate(s) or party with a plurality of votes (i.e. more than any other) or a majority of votes (i.e. 50 per cent plus one—an absolute majority) is/are declared

the winner(s). Such a system may use *single-member districts*—for example, First Past The Post, Alternative Vote or the Two-Round System—or *multi-member districts*—for example, the Block Vote and Party Block Vote.

Preferential voting systems – Electoral systems in which voters rank parties or candidates on the ballot paper in order of their choice.

Political party – A group of people who hold similar political aims and opinions who have organized, usually to contest elections so that they might form a government.

Polling site – A venue, for example a post office or a *diplomatic mission*, at which an *elector* exercising the right to *remote voting* attends to deposit his or her vote.

Polling station – A venue established for the purpose of polling and controlled by staff of the *electoral management body*.

Postal voting – A mechanism for voting in which an *elector* completes his or her ballot paper and returns it by post to an official designated to conduct the election.

Proportional representation (PR) – An *electoral system* family based on the principle of the conscious translation of the overall votes of a party or grouping into a corresponding proportion of seats in an elected body. For example, a party which wins 30 per cent of the votes will receive approximately 30 per cent of the seats. All PR systems require the use of *multi-member districts*. There are two major types of PR system, *List PR* and the Single Transferable Vote (STV).

Proxy voting – A mechanism for voting in which an *elector* who is qualified to vote formally appoints another person to vote on his or her behalf.

Refugee – A person who migrates from his or her home and country as a result of political, religious, ethnic, social or cultural conflicts which directly affect him or her.

Remote voting – A mechanism for voting by which voters are enabled to cast a vote which does not involve their attendance at a polling station on the day or days fixed for voting. Methods of remote voting include *postal voting*, *fax voting*, and *remote e-voting*.

Remote e-voting – A mechanism for voting in which an *elector* may cast his or her vote by means of an electronic device (for example a telephone or the Internet) at any place outside the *polling station* to which he or she is allocated.

Reserved seats – Seats in which a determinable criterion such as religion, ethnicity, language, gender or external registration is a requirement for nomination or election. See *External districts*.

Resident – A person who lives legally in a country on a long-term basis.

Returnee – An *internally displaced person* or *refugee* who has returned home but requires continued assistance for a period of time.

Single-member district – An *electoral district* from which only one member is elected to a legislature or elected body. See also *Multi-member district*.

Special external polling station – A public or private place located within a *host country* where the establishment of a *polling station* is permitted by that host country.