

Report Stockholm Conference on Electoral Integrity

10–12 June 2025
Stockholm, Sweden

Summary

The Stockholm Conference on Electoral Integrity, held June 10-12, 2025, brought together representatives from over 40 election management bodies (EMBs), researchers, and international development partners to address pressing global challenges facing elections. Organized as part of International IDEA's 30th anniversary, the Conference culminated in the Stockholm Consensus on Electoral Integrity, which outlines a four-point agenda for protecting electoral integrity worldwide.

Modern electoral challenges – from pandemics and climate change to disinformation and election denialism – require EMBs to collaborate extensively with other organisations. Successful examples include Sweden's Election Cooperation Network, which integrates police, security services, and local authorities, and Australia's Electoral Integrity Assurance Taskforce, which monitors foreign interference. The Conference emphasised that EMB leadership must be maintained in these cooperative arrangements to preserve independence and public trust.

Independence emerged as fundamental to stakeholder trust and election legitimacy. Countries where EMBs rank among the most trusted public institutions, demonstrate how independence creates a "virtuous cycle" that reinforces credibility. Key mechanisms include constitutional guarantees, transparent appointment processes that avoid political representation, protection against arbitrary dismissal, and adequate financing. However, even EMBs which enjoy independent constitutional status are not shielded from political pressure and need to continuously manifest independence in action.

Social media has created new threats to electoral integrity, enabling rapid spread of mis- and disinformation while amplifying extremist voices. This has led to harassment of election officials in the United States and violent attempts to overturn results in both the US and Brazil. EMBs are responding through constant public communication, digital awareness campaigns, and monitoring infrastructure. Examples include the Philippines' social media monitoring team and British Columbia's 2023 legislation establishing specific disinformation prohibitions with enforcement mechanisms.

Successful electoral reforms require EMB leadership and broad stakeholder consensus, while non-inclusive reforms risk compromising EMB neutrality when they are forced to critique questionable proposals in polarised environments. Conference participants discussed examples of successful reforms as well as the EMB role in recommending action, analysing proposals, and ensuring effective communication with stakeholders.

The conference highlighted several persistent challenges: declining international funding for election support organisations, increasing polarisation affecting election administration, voter apathy driven by governance failures, and the threat of malign actors exploiting digital platforms. EMBs face the dual challenge of maintaining operational excellence while adapting to rapidly evolving threats.

The Stockholm Consensus reflects recognition that electoral integrity requires coordinated national and international action. Regional cooperation networks, international standard-setting efforts, and continued knowledge exchange remain essential for upholding democratic electoral processes in an increasingly complex global environment. The Conference underscored that protecting electoral integrity is not about achieving better technical administration but about preserving democratic legitimacy itself.

Background: the road to the Stockholm Consensus on Electoral Integrity

The Stockholm Conference on Electoral Integrity, held as part of the 30th anniversary of the founding of International IDEA, brought together representatives of more than 40 election EMBs, researchers, international development partners, and other stakeholders to exchange views and experiences on pressing issues facing the global electoral community. The Conference was preceded by two online “Canberra to Stockholm” exchanges, which fed into the Conference agenda: on Reforming voting arrangements for changing demographics (November 2024) and on Leading reform, building trust, and managing crisis – an evolving mandate for EMBs (March 2025). The exchanges featured discussions between IDEA staff and election practitioners from Australia, Cabo Verde, Fiji, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and the United States.

The [Stockholm Consensus on Electoral Integrity](#) reflects key take-aways from the “Canberra to Stockholm” exchanges and the Conference, highlighting the achievements in upholding electoral integrity but also the challenges ahead. The Consensus charts a four-point agenda for protecting electoral integrity, calling on national and international actors to: (1) enhance cooperation nationally and globally; (2) strengthen mechanisms to protect EMBs’ independence; (3) promote respectful electoral conduct; and (4) ensure timely and effective democratic electoral reform.

This Conference Report endeavours to capture the key conversation threads related to the four thematic areas mapped in the Stockholm Consensus on Electoral Integrity. As such, it follows the structure of the Consensus, annotating and expanding on its themes, rather than reproducing the contents of each Conference session (see the Agenda in the Annex). The Report attempts to avoid repetitions, but since the four areas are closely intertwined, many issues are relevant to more than one theme. References to examples and practices are drawn from panel presentations, discussions, and informal exchanges during the Conference.

Area 1: Enhance cooperation nationally and globally

The changed nature of EMB operation was a recurrent theme, and a key one for many Conference speakers. New challenges facing elections, from pandemics and effects of climate change to disinformation and election “denialism”, mean it is no longer viable for EMBs to “go it alone”. Cooperation with other organisations and agencies is needed to summon the necessary expertise and resources in order to effectively prevent and address threats to electoral integrity. Multiple examples given by Conference panellists suggest that institutionalised inter-agency cooperation has emerged as a good electoral practice to counter integrity threats, particularly online.

For example, in Sweden, the Election Cooperation Network, led by the Election Authority, includes the police and the Security Service, the Civil Contingencies Agency, the Psychological Defence Agency, and county administrative boards. This network, which meets regularly – but more frequently during election periods – enables the Election Authority to co-ordinate election security and manage election-related incidents. The [Electoral Integrity Assurance Taskforce](#), chaired by the Australian Election Commission, is convened to ensure that electoral events are unaffected by interference by foreign governments or their proxies. To this end, the Taskforce monitors the information environment for potential interference, shares information on potential risks or threats, and advises the Electoral Commissioner on how identified risks or threats can be mitigated.

Underlining the value of such institutionalised inter-agency cooperation, several speakers also highlighted important conditions for its success. The first is the EMB leadership of the cooperative arrangements, with other agencies performing advisory and supporting roles. Related to this, the public should be assured that EMB independence is not compromised by the co-operation mechanisms. This is particularly relevant for contexts where government security agencies do not enjoy high levels of trust.

Other examples of cooperation in the fulfilment of EMB mandates include engagement with electoral stakeholders. In Namibia, a party liaison committee chaired by the EMB is an important consultation and communication forum, which also serves to assure political actors that they are treated fairly. Success of digital awareness campaigns in Canada is underpinned by engagement with numerous civil society organisations at the grassroots level, including partisan groups.

On the international level, the role of actors with a global reach was acknowledged by multiple speakers, and the decline in funding for such organisations was noted with concern. International IDEA’s efforts in supporting EMBs with relevant information and facilitating exchanges were repeatedly praised. In particular, IDEA’s collaborative relationship with member States was noted. A suggestion was made to create a permanent EMB council within the International IDEA’s governance structure. Exploring areas where value could be added by new knowledge products was also encouraged. One specific proposal was for International IDEA to develop detailed methodology of post-election assessments – something many EMBs are mandated to do by law, but without specific requirements as to the scope and techniques to be used.

Long-standing international partnerships, such as [ACE Electoral Knowledge Network](#) and [Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections \(BRIDGE\)](#), have been credited with making comparative knowledge and good electoral practices available more widely. Several speakers noted that international standard-setting is a dynamic process which should reflect new challenges and contexts. In that regard, continuing efforts to articulate global electoral norms, such as the Global Network for Securing Electoral Integrity (GNSEI), remain relevant.

Regional cooperation plays an important role for setting and upholding regional electoral standards, exchanging experience and exploring solutions to new challenges, and maintaining communities of practice which support and encourage professionalism among their members. Conference participants referred to the [Electoral Commissions Forum of Southern African Development Community Countries \(ECF-SADC\)](#) and the [Pacific Islands, Australia and New Zealand Electoral Administrators Network \(PIANZEA\)](#) as prime examples of regional cooperation. The [European cooperation network on elections](#), convened by the European Commission, has been active in fostering resilience against online threats in EU member states and recently launched a [Checklist for integrity of elections and Risk-management matrix](#).

Area 2: Strengthen mechanisms to protect EMBs' independence

Conference participants were unequivocal in their support for strengthening EMB independence. Several speakers emphasised the relationship between EMB independence and stakeholders' trust in electoral administration and, ultimately, the acceptance of election outcomes. Parties losing elections are more likely to accept the result if they believe they have been treated fairly, which in turn is more likely if they perceive the EMB to be acting impartially. Independence creates a foundation for impartiality, although it does not guarantee it.

Stakeholder trust makes EMBs more resilient and enables them to counter threats such as disinformation campaigns more effectively. Experiences of Australia, Canada, and Sweden, where EMBs are among the most trusted public institutions, also demonstrate a “virtuous cycle”, in which higher trust reinforces independence. A trusted EMB should not be quiet about it but reiterate in its communication that it is a trusted institution. Being trusted does not lower the bar for institutional performance, however, as the public expects nothing short of operational excellence – which may become taken for granted.

Constitutional guarantees of EMB independence are a good starting point. For example, in India, the constitutional status of the Election Commission, coupled with its vast regulatory powers, lays a foundation for independence. At the same time, speakers from Brazil and Mexico pointed out that the EMBs' constitutional status does not shield it from political pressure and the need to continuously demonstrate independence in action.

Among the mechanisms deserving particular attention are selection and appointment methods, which should ensure an EMB composition that enjoys support of the broadest political spectrum. In this context, several reservations were expressed with respect to

appointment formulas based on political party representation. While having the advantage of providing a direct communication channel to political parties, such EMB compositions also create difficulties for impartial decision-making and often result in perceptions of bias, which negatively affect stakeholder trust.

Guarantees against arbitrary dismissal of election commissioners are another important factor. For example, the Canadian election commissioner is appointed for a single ten-year term and cannot be removed from office. Adequate financing was also mentioned by several speakers as a key factor in fostering independence. In Mexico, cuts to the EMB budget made performance in recent elections far more challenging. Several speakers from Africa voiced concerns that aid cuts may affect the ability of under-resourced EMBs on the continent to deliver on their mandates.

Area 3: Promote respectful electoral conduct

Threats to election integrity emanating from social media information space were at the centre of Conference discussions. Social media platforms and channels make it easy to spread misinformation and disinformation about elections, often amplifying voices of hitherto marginal conspiracy theorists and malign actors. These discourses, encouraged by politicians unwilling to concede their defeats, paved the way for violent attempts to overturn election results in the United States and in Brazil. Election administrators became frequent targets of various forms of harassment in the United States, leading to dearth of experienced officials and loss of institutional memory in election administration. In the United Kingdom, candidates increasingly experience virulent online attacks, which often target women and minorities.

Conference participants shared experiences and discussed the role of EMBs in addressing these and other related challenges. On the preventive side, many speakers stressed the importance of constant public communication by the EMB. By informing and explaining all steps in the process, the EMB is able to pre-bunk some of the disinformation even before it emerges. In Australia, Canada, and Sweden the EMBs' communication places emphasis on the processes in place to rectify any potential errors. Digital awareness campaigns, in cooperation with civil society and media, are instrumental for building resilience to false narratives among the general public. Promoting respectful electoral conduct between political parties and candidates reduces space for personal attacks.

In addition to prevention, EMBs also need to build infrastructure for effectively responding to these threats. This includes the capacity to monitor campaign discourse and social media in order to timely identify emerging threats, and to take action against them. Both elements call for EMB leadership and intra-agency cooperation, as discussed above. Additional legislation may also be needed to give the EMB the tools they need for effective action.

For example, in the Philippines, the election commission has a monitoring team, which works to identify unauthentic behaviour in social media and de-bunks false information. The commission has also created several task forces which monitor the campaign and recommend to take action to sanction prohibited speech, such as calls to gender-based discrimination.

The commission has signed memorandums with the major social media platforms and has seen its requests followed up on, including taking down of posts. In Mexico, reform to address political violence against women provided the EMB with additional mandates and tools, including monitoring election campaigns.

One example of special legislation can be found in the Canadian province of British Columbia, which adopted legislative amendments in 2023, establishing prohibitions on specific types of disinformation, together with enforcement tools including administrative penalties and the election commissioner's powers to order platforms to take down non-compliant content. The prohibitions relate to false statements to affect election results; about election officials or voting administration tools; false election information; misrepresentation and transmission of unauthorised materials or information. The prohibitions are carefully circumscribed to strike a balance between freedom of expression and the imperatives of free and fair elections.

Representatives of several EMBs also remarked on the challenges in the quality of democracy which project themselves into the electoral process. Issues such as venomous relationship between political parties and polarisation negatively affect not only the campaign environment but also election administration, causing shortages of staff and conflict-prone work environments. Problems with governance and poor public service provision are causing voter apathy, disillusionment and disengagement from the political process, which EMBs are finding difficult to rekindle.

Area 4: Ensure timely and effective democratic electoral reform

Conference discussions explored different dimensions of electoral reform and the role played by EMBs. A number of presentations featured successful reforms led by EMBs, which enjoyed broad consensus among the stakeholders and resulted in improved integrity of elections. One example mentioned earlier, from British Columbia in Canada, related to prohibitions of certain types of disinformation. In another example, in Namibia, the EMB spearheaded reform to introduce biometric voter registration, which improved the accuracy of the voter register. The new system is perceived as credible by stakeholders. The election commission conducted mock voter registration exercises, to ensure that people become familiar with the new system before it was introduced.

Chile's Electoral Service (Servel) played a key role in several recent reforms. For the first constitutional process which began in 2020, Servel advised on laws related to the composition of the constitutional drafting body, including on gender parity, indigenous representation, and inclusion of persons with disabilities, as well as on the stages and timelines for plebiscites and elections. For the 2021 elections, held during the Covid-19 pandemic, Servel proposed voting to be held over two days, for the first time in Chile's history. This successful experience was repeated in the 2024 municipal and regional elections.

Several EMBs also shared how they work on proposals which have not yet become laws. Ukraine's Central Election Commission is developing a package of amendments for the country's post-war elections, which need to address critical challenges, including damage to

infrastructure; special voting arrangements for internally displaced persons, military, and persons with disabilities; and minimising Russian interference and influence.

The United Kingdom's Electoral Commission made recommendations to strengthen the political finance regime by legally requiring parties to conduct know-your-donor checks on donations; preventing companies from donating more than they have made in the UK; and ensuring those who donate to unincorporated associations are permissible donors. These proposals are currently being considered by stakeholders.

Conference participants also discussed how electoral reforms which do not attempt to be inclusive and build broad political consensus pose multiple risks. They may represent attempts to entrench power by incumbents or at the minimum gain an undue electoral advantage. Caught in highly polarised reform debates, EMBs voicing criticism of dubious reform proposals may find themselves accused of taking sides, to the detriment of their independent and neutral stance.

Annex



Stockholm Conference on Electoral Integrity

10–12 June 2025, Stockholm, Sweden

AGENDA

Electoral processes are conducted in increasingly challenging environments. The Stockholm Conference will serve as an opportunity for policy dialogue between electoral management bodies (EMBs) and electoral stakeholders, emphasising EMB leadership and independence in complex regulatory questions. A Stockholm Consensus will formalise the concerns and action points.

(Pre-conference) Monday, 9 June | International IDEA Headquarters | Democracy Room

16:00 - 17:30 | Public Lecture

Stockholm Series: The Impact of Climate Change on Electoral Processes

The Stockholm Series of Public Lectures on Climate Change and Democracy (Stockholm Series) is a cooperation between renowned Stockholm-based institutions with a particular focus on climate change and democracy from different perspectives. It aims to inform, inspire, and engage experts and the general public alike by providing high-profile public lectures on the climate-democracy nexus, followed by debate.

- **Sarah Birch**, Professor of Political Science, King's College London
- **Tom Rogers**, International IDEA Board Member and Former Election Commissioner of Australia

17:30 - 18:30 Reception | Kitchen (downstairs)

Tuesday, 10 June | International IDEA Headquarters | Democracy Room

13:00 - 14:30 | The Electoral Management Bodies of International IDEA Member States

Opening

- **Irfan Rahman**, Election Commissioner, Mauritius

Presentation

- 30 Years of Member State Engagement, Senior Election Experts at International IDEA

Facilitated EMB Discussion

- EMB identification of emerging challenges for IDEA work

Moderated Discussion by Therese Pearce Laanela, Head of Electoral Processes, International IDEA

Group Photo

14:30 - 15:30 Coffee Break | Hallway

15:30 - 17:00 | Conference Opening

Welcome Remarks

- **Dag Hartelius**, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Sweden
- **Kevin Casas-Zamora**, Secretary-General, International IDEA

Keynote Speakers

- **Shri Gyanesh Kumar**, Chief Election Commissioner, Electoral Commission of India
- **Norma Irene de la Cruz**, Electoral Councillor, Instituto Nacional Electoral (INE), Mexico
- **Mosotho Moepya**, Chairperson, Electoral Commission, South Africa

Moderated Discussion by Leena Rikkilä Tamang, Director of Asia and the Pacific region, International IDEA

17:00 - 18:00 Reception | Kitchen (downstairs)

Wednesday, 11 June | Stockholm Conference on Electoral Integrity | HayMarket by Scandic

8:30 - 9:00 | Registration | Room: Hallway (2nd floor)

9:00 - 10:30 | Session 1 – EMB Leadership under Challenging Conditions | HayMarket Rooms 3 & 4

The morning plenary and discussions will explore the challenges of conducting trustworthy elections in a radically uncertain and rapidly changing world and the leadership role of electoral management bodies in meeting those challenges.

Presentations

- **EMB Independence and Why it Matters:** Tom Rogers, International IDEA Board Member, Former Election Commissioner, Australia
- **Exemplifying EMB Leadership and Inter-agency Cooperation:** Anna Nyqvist, Chief Executive, Swedish Election Authority
- **EMB Independence and Electoral Trust:** Stéphane Perrault, Chief Electoral Officer, Elections Canada

Moderated Discussion by Olufunto Akinduro, Senior Advisor, Electoral Processes, International IDEA

10:30 - 11:00 Coffee Break | Hallway (2nd floor)

11:00 - 12:30 | Session 2 - Safeguards for EMB Independence | HayMarket Rooms 3 & 4

This session will explore the mechanisms, support systems, and regulatory safeguards needed to protect EMBs and their temporary workforce from inappropriate political pressure, public attacks, and harm.

- **Cármén Lúcia**, Chief Justice, Supreme Electoral Tribunal, Brazil
- **Sonia Bea L. Wee-Lozada**, Director IV, Commission on Elections, Philippines
- **Kristine Saulité**, Chairperson of the Central Election Commission, Latvia
- **Elsie Nghikembua**, Chairperson of the Electoral Commission, Namibia

Moderated Discussion by Marcela Rios Tobar, Director of Latin America and the Caribbean region, International IDEA

12:30 - 13:30 Lunch | Restaurant Paul's, HayMarket (1st floor)

13:30 - 15:15 | Session 3 – EMB Leadership in Reform and Regulation | HayMarket Rooms 3 & 4

Designing regulations and enforcing existing rules in volatile areas such as political financing and the information environment is one of the most complex contemporary challenges in electoral management. Upholding the principles of a level playing field is daunting in the face of powerful domestic and geopolitical interests. The panelists will discuss the challenges of upholding democracy and the interests of the potentially disenfranchised in regulatory design and how to mitigate the risks of unintended consequences, difficult security conditions, public distrust, or political pressure in the conduct of elections and rollout of reforms.

- **Vijay Rangarajan**, Chief Executive of the Election Commission, United Kingdom
- **Pamela Figueroa**, President of the Electoral Service, Chile
- **Vitalii Plukar**, Deputy Chairperson, The Central Election Commission, Ukraine
- **Anton Boegman**, Chief Electoral Officer, Elections BC, Canada

Respondent: Advice to EMBs on Regulating in Fast-Moving Spaces, **Professor Cristie Ford**, University of British Columbia

Moderated Discussion by Peter Wolf, Principal Adviser, Elections and Digitalization, International IDEA

15:15 - 15:50 Coffee Break | Hallway (2nd floor)

15:50 - 17:30 | Session 4 - Global Cooperation on Electoral Integrity | HayMarket Rooms 3 & 4

What support do EMBs need in a fast-changing world? The world has changed dramatically, and many of the issues facing EMBs go beyond national borders. From facilitation of out-of-country voting, regulation of campaigns and financing, and attempts to destabilize elections from outside. Transnational cooperation and revitalising of global norms are now high on the agenda. Drastic cuts in global development and the risks of electoral assistance legitimatising undemocratic processes are prompting a rethink in electoral assistance.

What Support Do EMB's Need in a Fast-changing World?

- **Gregor Wenda**, Head of Electoral Affairs Department, Ministry of Interior, Austria
- **Irina Schoulgin-Nyoni**, Ambassador for Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs
- **Jasper Highwood Anisi**, Chief Electoral Officer, Solomon Islands
- **Daniel Fleischer-Ambrus**, Team Leader, Democracy, European Commission DG JUST

Moderated Discussion by Annika Silva-Leander, Head of North America and Permanent Observer to the United Nations, International IDEA

Concluding Remarks and Stockholm Consensus

- **Therese Pearce Laanela**, Head of Electoral Processes, International IDEA
- **Anna Nyqvist**, Chief Executive, Swedish Election Authority