



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

# **Constitutional Referendum in Azerbaijan**

As delivered by Chargé d' Affaires, a.i. Kate Byrnes  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
October 4, 2016

As the Azerbaijani delegation stated, Azerbaijan conducted a constitutional referendum on September 26. However, the Venice Commission noted that the process would have benefitted from greater time for public discussion prior to the vote, and prior consultation with the Commission, especially regarding several provisions regarding presidential power.

The United States has previously expressed concern to the government of Azerbaijan about activists arbitrarily detained during protests earlier in the campaign. While some have been released, we urge the government to release those still detained as well as those incarcerated before the campaign, such as Ilgar Mammadov. We also urge the government to address reports of voting irregularities and the Venice Commission's recommendations.

The United States remains committed to helping Azerbaijanis build a stable and prosperous democracy based on the rule of law and respect for human rights, and encourages political transparency and dialogue within the country.

Thank you, Madam Chair.