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United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Elections in Kazakhstan

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a. i. Carol Fuller
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 7, 2011

Following the results of the presidential elections on April 3 in Kazakhstan, the United States welcomes the preliminary conclusions set forth in the Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions issued jointly by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights on April 4th.

We are pleased that the ODIHR/PA report found the election commissions at all levels, including the Central Election Commission, handled the technical aspects of the election in a professional manner. The report makes clear that ODIHR saw efforts by authorities to improve the election legislation and incorporate some OSCE recommendations. The report also noted that efforts were made to improve the quality of the voter lists by conducting a large-scale door-to-door verification process and by ensuring public review. These improvements are important and need to be built upon for the future.

While we appreciate these and the other improvements noted by ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, we nonetheless urge the government of Kazakhstan to address the serious shortcomings they also highlighted.

According to ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly election observers noted serious irregularities, including:

- numerous instances of seemingly identical signatures on voter lists;
- cases of ballot box stuffing;
- lack of transparency in the vote count and tabulation, and the frequent failure to follow proper procedures;
- restrictions on the ability of international observers to perform their tasks; and
- intervention by many local authorities in the election process in order to increase turnout.

I wish to point out that U.S. Embassy observers also witnessed similar irregularities.

Such irregularities are not in keeping with Kazakhstan's OSCE commitments and obligation to its citizens to hold elections that meet OSCE standards. The statement made by the Parliamentary Assembly and ODIHR and the ODIHR report establish that Kazakhstan still needs to make improvements to meet its democratic commitments, particularly in the fields of freedom of assembly and media.

We note President Nazarbayev's stated commitment to "political modernization," and Kazakhstan's national development program through 2020 as a part of the country's long-term path to democracy. We hope, therefore, that the government will view the recommendations in the ODIHR report as constructive guidance for future improvements that will help it move forward on that path.

As we are all aware, the OSCE represents the gold-standard in election monitoring. Therefore, its finding that the latest election in Kazakhstan reveals the urgency of implementing long-awaited reforms should not be ignored. We join in that assessment and urge Kazakhstani officials to implement the recommendations fully before Kazakhstan's upcoming parliamentary elections.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.