



United States Mission to the OSCE

Parliamentary Elections in Kazakhstan

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 7, 2016

I'd like to thank the distinguished Kazakh colleague for his statement and for putting this item on our agenda today.

The United States concurs with the preliminary assessment of the joint International Election Observation Mission, which included the OSCE Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, regarding the March 20, 2016, parliamentary elections in Kazakhstan. The elections were efficiently organized and showed some progress in certain areas; candidate registration was inclusive and six political parties participated in the elections. However, international election observers found an absence of genuine political choice and a variety of serious procedural irregularities during voting, ballot counting, and tabulation similar to problems noted in previous elections. During the campaign period, observers also noted the restriction of fundamental civil and political rights and a lack of diverse opinions in the media.

As the International Election Observation Mission assessed, Kazakhstan still has a considerable way to go in meeting its OSCE commitments related to democratic elections and the enjoyment of civil and political rights. The United States encourages Kazakhstan to implement the reforms necessary for democratic elections in a competitive environment in keeping with its international obligations and commitments, particularly with respect to the exercise of fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly.

We took positive note of the distinguished Kazakh Ambassador's statement that Kazakhstan would take seriously the recommendations from the International Election Observation Mission, including those contained in the final report. We take this opportunity to reiterate our strong support for ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's work in election observation. There's a reason why the OSCE is known the world over as the "gold standard" in election observation.

In the spirit of our strategic partnership with Kazakhstan, the United States looks forward to working with the citizens, civil society, and government of Kazakhstan, including the new parliament, to achieve Kazakhstan's goal of a more transparent government accountable to its people, and to strengthen the culture and institutions of public participation in the political process.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.