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United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the Elections in the United States

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly to the Permanent Council, Vienna November 8, 2012

The United States knows that much of the world, including participating States assembled here, have taken a keen interest in our elections this year. As an open democracy, we are honored to have observers witness our elections and we look forward to hearing the ODIHR final report. The United States extended an early invitation to both ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to send election observers. We value the OSCE's sustained contributions to the promotion of democracy and human rights, including its election observation efforts. We stand firmly behind these efforts and are ready to hear any assessment of our elections.

Within the United States federal system, the responsibility for the organization of elections rests with state and local governments. With this in mind, the Department of State sent letters of introduction to key election officials in every state to remind them of the OSCE's election observation activities and the commitments the United States has made with respect to those activities. The Department of State also responded publicly to questions from the media about these election observation missions. While each state has its own election rules for accredited poll watchers, which are to be applied equally to all those who wish to monitor electoral practices, the Department of State took steps to underscore the U.S. Government's strong support for the OSCE and this mission. Working within the framework of our federal system, we encouraged local and state authorities to apply their rules fairly so as to allow all observers to perform their mission, while ensuring that local authorities are able to conduct orderly elections.

The U.S. regrets that ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly observation missions issued separate preliminary statements, rather than a single joint statement, in relation to the U.S. elections. We note that ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly have complementary strengths, and we believe that election observation is much more effective when these two bodies work closely together. We urge ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary to cooperate in practice and in spirit as they observe elections across the OSCE space.

We thank ODIHR, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and all other election observers for their efforts to report on our elections. No democratic process is perfect. All participating States, including the United States, should strive to improve their democratic practices to ensure the human rights, prosperity, and overall welfare of their citizens.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.