



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the Elections in Azerbaijan

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 23, 2008

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We congratulate the people of Azerbaijan on the occasion of the country's presidential election on October 15th.

We agree with the preliminary joint assessment of the OSCE ODIHR, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament that this year's presidential election "marked considerable progress towards meeting OSCE and Council of Europe commitments", but "did not meet all commitments."

We note the peaceful manner in which the election was carried out. Important progress in improving the conduct of election day was noted by U.S. government observers.

At the same time, we encourage the government of Azerbaijan to build upon this progress by promptly addressing the issues raised by the OSCE/ODIHR monitoring mission in the lead-up to the election and in the preliminary assessment issued October 16, 2008, including problems concerning freedom of assembly, association and the media, and political pluralism.

The United States looks forward to working with the people of Azerbaijan - the country's elected leaders, civil society, and opposition - to strengthen democratic institutions and advance our broad range of shared interests.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.