



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the Re-Run Parliamentary Elections in Azerbaijan

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 18, 2006

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States supports strongly the strengthening of democratic institutions and civil society in Azerbaijan, including efforts to improve the electoral process. In this regard, we followed closely the conduct of the May 13th parliamentary re-run elections in ten parliamentary constituencies. To assist in addressing the shortcomings that were identified during the conduct of the November 6th, 2005 elections, the United States provided substantial assistance to Azerbaijan throughout the campaign and during the elections themselves. We supported the democratic process, not particular parties or candidates. Our efforts included supporting domestic election observation and training, the facilitation of an exit poll, and providing invisible finger-ink. We also deployed United States Embassy teams as accredited international observers to observe the conduct of the elections.

The United States appreciates the hard work of Ambassador Ahren's Limited Election Observation Mission. We concur with the Mission's conclusions published on May 15th. We welcome improvements in the implementation of finger-inking, as well as the rapid posting of the results on the website of the Central Election Commission. The United States was pleased especially that a large number of domestic election observers participated in the election process, since local involvement of citizens is integral to democratic processes. We note also that there was consistency between official and exit poll results. However, we remain concerned about reports of irregularities in the pre-election period, including the misuse of administrative authority in support of specific candidates, as well as about legal violations and fraud in specific precincts on election day itself.

These re-run elections should be viewed in the overall context of the November 6th, 2005 parliamentary elections. We continue to share the comprehensive assessment of ODIHR on that process. We urge the Government of Azerbaijan to continue to work with ODIHR and to implement its recommendations so that the electoral process in Azerbaijan can meet fully international standards. The United States will continue to support the aspirations of the government and people of Azerbaijan to build a democratic, prosperous and peaceful future.

Thank you.