



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Presidential Elections in Tajikistan

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 14, 2013

The United States concurs with the preliminary assessment of the Tajikistan's recent Presidential elections released in Dushanbe by the ODIHR/OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Election Observation Mission. We are pleased that international organizations were allowed to participate as observers throughout the country, and we commend ODIHR and the PA for their constructive cooperation during this Election Observation Mission.

While the elections were peaceful, restrictive candidate-registration requirements resulted in a lack of pluralism and genuine choice. Family, proxy, and multiple voting were also prevalent. These are areas that have been identified for improvement in previous elections, and we call on the Tajik government to address these serious shortcomings.

Moving forward, we urge the Tajik government authorities to conduct a transparent, credible investigation of all reported electoral violations, allow for greater access by the media, and to implement the recommendations made in ODIHR's final report.

In the recent past, some participating States have alleged that observed irregularities in elections do not matter if they did not affect the outcome. This is not the case. Irregularities undermine the integrity and legitimacy of the election process, and when combined with the restrictions on human rights and fundamental freedoms they turn what should be a meaningful opportunity for political participation for citizens into an unfortunate episode of political theater.

We have all made robust commitments regarding the conduct of our elections. Those commitments provide the framework for participating States to follow in order to ensure the accuracy and legitimacy of our election results. The ODIHR/PA Election Observation Missions are there to hold us to those commitments and to provide a roadmap for us to follow in order to fully implement our shared commitments.

Tajikistan has come a long way since the end of a brutal civil war. We welcome the progress Tajikistan has made in improving its electoral process, but there is still a long way to go. True democracy is about more than an election day. We urge the Tajik government to begin working now to strengthen political pluralism, allow true opposition parties to operate, and expand operating space for independent media and civil society, including by protecting fundamental freedoms of association and expression.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.