



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement in Response to ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission Report on Azerbaijani Parliamentary Election

As delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 23, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We welcome the release of the report of ODIHR's Needs Assessment Mission for Azerbaijan's Parliamentary Election, which is scheduled for this November and are pleased that the Needs Assessment Mission has recommended a large Election Observation Mission for the election.

The United States also welcomes the invitation to international observers and stands ready to provide an appropriate number of observers to the ODIHR mission this November, and encourages other participating States to contribute to it as well.

The United States encourages ODIHR to deploy two experts to observe the process of candidate registration, which we note that the Office is considering.

The United States would also like to take this opportunity to call on Azerbaijan to implement fully the May 11 Presidential Decree calling for the conduct of free and fair elections and to work with international organizations, including the OSCE's ODIHR, to implement recommended reforms in advance of the November elections to ensure the elections are held in accordance with OSCE standards. Relevant OSCE recommendations include those made by the OSCE needs assessment mission, as well as previous OSCE documents on this subject.

As noted in a June 20th spot report from the OSCE Office in Baku, opposition parties were able to hold a largely peaceful, sanctioned rally on June 18th for the second time in a month. We view this as a positive step and call on the government and all political parties to continue to hold to the non-violent standard that has been set by these two rallies and to conduct professional electoral campaigns, training in which is available from U.S.-funded organizations.

Thank you.