



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Kazakh Parliamentary Elections

As delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 23, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Over the past year, the Government of Kazakhstan undertook some substantial efforts to improve its electoral law and the conduct of its elections. We applaud those efforts.

While we wait for the full OHDIR before making more substantive comments on Sunday's parliamentary elections, I would like to take note here that we do share the view of the OSCE observation mission that the elections, in the end, unfortunately fall short of meeting OSCE commitments.

While elements of this election represent an improvement over previous ones, there were also serious shortcomings. A number of aspects of the improved election law were not implemented in an effective and impartial manner.

In its preliminary report the OSCE mission noted several areas of concern, including political imbalance in the composition of the election commissions, media bias in favor of pro-presidential parties, and haphazard introduction of electronic voting.

We take positive note, however, of the registration of 12 parties, including the opposition party Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan, and improvements in the election law including greater access for domestic observers.

Prior to these elections, and in order to encourage a free and open process, the United States supported voter education, get out the vote campaigns, independent opinion polling, and domestic monitoring efforts. We also provided more than 40 members of the OSCE international observer mission.

We understand the comprehensive final report to be issued in a few weeks and that that will outline all of the improvements and shortcomings. In the meantime, we urge the Central Election Commission to release the official results as quickly as possible. This, we feel, is critical in building the confidence of voters in the election process and in maintaining the credibility of the election results. We also hope that the Government of Kazakhstan will promptly and fairly address concerns raised by the OSCE and other international observers, as well as any complaints and appeals related to violations of the elections law.

We hope that Kazakhstan's positive efforts will continue and that it will bring its electoral law into full compliance with international standards and with its OSCE commitments. We stand ready to assist Kazakhstan in improving its electoral process.

Thank you.