



United States Mission to the OSCE
**Statement on Azerbaijan's Criticism of
ODIHR's Needs Assessment Mission
Report for the Presidential Elections**

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 18, 2013

Mr. Chairman,

We also do not question the right of Azerbaijan to make comments on ODIHR's Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) report but we would also like to reiterate our full support of ODIHR's methodology and autonomy. ODIHR's methodology is transparent and objective, and that is why it enjoys credibility among the OSCE participating States, other international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and domestic observer groups. That credibility also rests on ODIHR's autonomy and the ability of ODIHR election experts to do their job without political interference. Critical comments by ODIHR do not imply in and of themselves partiality or lack of objectivity on the part of ODIHR.

I will note that ODIHR was quite critical of the conduct of U.S. elections last November. The United States welcomes such constructive criticism and so, in this spirit, we invited ODIHR this year to Washington to present their recommendations to the appropriate authorities.

I would also like to reiterate that we appreciate the significant and highly valuable contributions of the Parliamentary Assembly to the election observation process.

Finally, and to conclude, I would like to emphasize that disagreement with elements of any assessment report cannot be used as an excuse not to honor OSCE commitments. We urge our Azerbaijani colleagues to immediately issue an open, unrestricted invitation to ODIHR and the Parliamentary Assembly to observe the October presidential elections.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.