



**United States Mission to the OSCE**

**Constitutional Referendum in Tajikistan**

As delivered by Deputy Chief of Mission Kate Byrnes  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
May 26, 2016

We take note of the statement by Tajikistan on the constitutional referendum held May 22.

The United States is concerned that some of the constitutional amendments approved, as well as some recent legislation, may have a negative impact on the democratic development of the country. We are concerned that a new constitutional amendment which essentially grants President Rahmon the right to run for office an unlimited number of times is contrary to democratic values. Moreover, legislation adopted last December awarding him the title “Leader of the Nation” also grants him immunity for prosecution for life and protects his family and their property from legal proceedings. This is contrary to democratic standards of holding elected officials accountable to their citizens.

In Copenhagen in 1990, all OSCE participating States affirmed “that democracy is an inherent element of the rule of law,” and that it is “a form of government that is representative in character, in which the executive is accountable to the elected legislature or the electorate.” Participating States also committed themselves to “respect the right of individuals and groups to establish, in full freedom, their own political parties or other political organizations and provide such political parties and organizations with the necessary legal guarantees to enable them to compete with each other on a basis of equal treatment before the law and by the authorities.”

The United States urges the government of Tajikistan to fully respect its OSCE and international commitments, and work towards strengthening democratic institutions in the country.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.