



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Presidential Election in Turkmenistan

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 16, 2012

The United States notes that the Government of Turkmenistan held presidential elections on February 12 and that President Gurbanguly Berdimuhammedov was re-elected. We look forward to continued cooperation with President Berdimuhammedov and the government of Turkmenistan on issues of mutual interest.

We regret that conditions were not appropriate for ODIHR to deploy an observation mission for this election. In its December 2011 report, the ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission concluded that Turkmenistan's continued limitations on fundamental freedoms, its failure to allow genuine political competition, and the government's lack of progress in bringing the country's legal framework into line with OSCE commitments to democratic elections left no space for an election observation to add value. We regret very much the absence of a constructive international observation report, which would have been of value for pointing the way toward progress in Turkmenistan's democratic development.

The United States appreciates that Turkmenistan passed a new law on political parties this year. Until real political reforms are achieved, however, including respect for the fundamental freedoms of assembly, peaceful association, religion and expression, it will be difficult to create the competitive environment necessary for a multi-party system to flourish. It remains the belief of the United States that only through such democratic reforms can a prosperous future for Turkmenistan—and sustainable peace and security in the region—be fully realized.

We urge the Government of Turkmenistan to make its rhetorical commitment to a more pluralistic society meaningful by enacting further reforms that will create conditions for genuine competition. The United States reiterates its readiness to support the Government of Turkmenistan as it undertakes such reforms.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.