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United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Albanian Parliamentary Elections

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Carol Fuller
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 17, 2009

Madam Chair,

The United States congratulates the citizens and Government of Albania on the parliamentary elections held on June 28, 2009. The Government of Albania deserves credit for genuine progress on many fronts in this election, and the citizens of Albania deserve praise for coming out to vote in large numbers and for carrying out peaceful and orderly elections. The outcome of the vote clearly represents the will of the Albanian people.

The OSCE/ODIHR Final Report noted that the election itself, while not meeting Albania's full potential, nonetheless met most OSCE commitments and demonstrated substantial improvements in the voter registration process, the legal framework, the voting, counting, and the adjudication of post-election disputes. The Government of Albania has done a credible job in developing the necessary tools for free and fair elections. The provisions in the new Electoral Code adopted in late 2008 were valuable in reforming the electoral process. Extracting voter lists from the computerized National Center Status Register was also a significant and positive development. Likewise, the Central Election Commission's efforts to prepare and administer the elections professionally and transparently should be commended.

Nevertheless some of these improvements did not fully result in the improved climate of trust they were intended to foster. This was particularly true in the areas of media bias and politicization of some aspects of the vote. Politicization of technical aspects of the process, including during vote count and tabulation, as well as violations observed during the campaign, undermined public confidence in the election process. We agree with ODIHR that the conduct of democratic elections depends largely on the commitment of all political parties to respect the letter and the purpose of the law.

We are confident the Government and people of Albania will carefully study the comprehensive recommendations provided by ODIHR in its Final Report and promote the changes necessary for Albania to realize its potential to attain the highest standards for democratic elections.

Finally, we would like to once again congratulate OSCE, including ODIHR and the Parliamentary Assembly, on another well-managed election observation mission.

Thank you, Madam Chair.