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United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Russian Election Observation

As delivered by Political Counselor, Samuel C. Laeuchli
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 1, 2007

Mr. Chairman,

We would like to add our voice to the many states that have expressed concern about the observation of the upcoming Russian Duma election.

While we welcome the fact that the Russian Federation extended an invitation to the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) to observe the elections, we are disappointed that Russia has chosen to place significant restrictions on the observation mission. These restrictions are unprecedented, and we believe that the invitation should be without conditions.

We regret that a normal mission of long-term observers was not able to be deployed.

ODIHR is best qualified to determine the most appropriate structure to conduct observation missions, including the number of observers needed for effective observation, based upon the particular circumstances of individual elections.

All OSCE states should live up to their democratic commitments, not just in the letter but also in principles and in spirit.

We urge the Russian Federation to continue to work with ODIHR, in order to take advantage of the remaining time to create the best possible conditions for the OSCE's election monitoring.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.