



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on First Round of Ukrainian Presidential Election

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Paul W. Jones
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 4, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and let me also express our appreciation for the congratulations of Ukraine for the recent elections of the United States.

Mr. Chairman, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage wrote in the October 29th edition of the Financial Times that: "The U.S. Government certainly supports Ukraine's sovereignty and future with the Euro-Atlantic community of free nations. Indeed, we are committed to working with our partners and allies to help Ukraine attain its declared goal of joining institutions such as NATO, the European Union and World Trade Organization."

However, Deputy Secretary Armitage further noted that: "Membership in those institutions – and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, to which Ukraine already belongs – confers responsibilities and obligations, not least of which is conducting a free and fair election and accompanying campaign."

Unfortunately, the preliminary findings of the OSCE International Election Observation Mission regarding the first round of the Ukrainian presidential election on October 31 indicate that Ukrainian authorities have ignored the serious concerns expressed by the United States and other delegations in this forum in recent months.

The United States welcomes the positive developments cited in the OSCE Mission's preliminary findings, especially the existence of political pluralism; the engagement of civil society; and relatively orderly voting on election day.

We also commend those courageous broadcast journalists employed by government-run and government-aligned media who proclaimed on October 28 that they would not follow government instructions on how to report on events, but would insist on conducting their work in accordance with the journalistic ethic of objectivity.

These positive aspects of the October 31st balloting in Ukraine are very much overshadowed, however, by many more negative developments that led the OSCE International Election Observation Mission to conclude that the election process leading up to and on October 31 did not meet a considerable number of OSCE standards for democratic elections and "constitutes a step backward from the 2002 elections."

There is no need to recount here the findings of the OSCE Observation Mission and those of numerous other credible observers. We note that, despite four interim reports by the OSCE Observation Mission detailing the abuse of state resources and overwhelming bias in state

media on behalf of Prime Minister Yanukovich's campaign, coercion of voters and harassment and obstruction of opposition campaign activities, Ukraine's leadership took no action.

It is not too late for Ukrainian authorities to take the corrective action that would promote fairness and transparency in the second round of the election scheduled for November 21.

In the 1990 Copenhagen Document, all participating States agreed that: "free elections . . . under conditions which ensure in practice the free expression of the opinion of the electors in the choice of their representatives" are a basic and unalienable human right.

In light of its acceptance of this commitment, we call upon the Government of Ukraine to embrace the OSCE International Observation Mission's preliminary findings and take every step possible to ensure that the Ukrainian people are able to exercise genuine freedom to choose their President.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.