



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Presidential Election in Azerbaijan**

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
October 17, 2013

We commend the Government of Azerbaijan for inviting ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to observe this election. The United States is proud to have contributed two Long-Term Observers and 25 Short-Term Observers to the observation mission, and we thank all 41 of the participating States that provided support to this mission.

The United States offers its strong support for the October 10 preliminary statement of the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA) on the October 9 Presidential election in Azerbaijan. We commend the close cooperation of ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly as they observed the election and offered a joint, clear assessment of the many serious shortcomings that need to be addressed in order for Azerbaijan to fully meet its OSCE commitments. On the basis of the joint ODIHR and OSCE Parliamentary Assembly initial assessment, which stated that the election "was undermined by limitations on the freedoms of expression, assembly, and association," highlighted that the campaign was marred by "candidate and voter intimidation and a restrictive media environment," and cited "significant problems...throughout all stages of election day processes," we regret that this election fell far short of the international standards and Azerbaijan's commitments to the OSCE.

Deputy Spokesperson of the U.S. State Department Marie Harf, in a statement on October 10, highlighted the report of ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and noted that election day procedural irregularities included ballot box stuffing, serious problems with vote counting, and failure to record the number of received ballots. She also stated that "leading up to election day, the Government of Azerbaijan also maintained a repressive political environment. Authorities interfered with the media and civil society routinely, sometimes violently interrupted peaceful rallies and meetings before and occasionally during the campaign period, and jailed a number of opposition and youth activists."

At the same time, the United States notes the comments in the ODIHR and OSCE Parliamentary Assembly preliminary statement on constructive steps taken by the Government of Azerbaijan during the election campaign, including the successful registration of Jamil Hasanli and certain other opposition candidates, authorization of some opposition campaign rallies, and efficient technical preparation for the election.

The United States urges the Government of Azerbaijan to respect its OSCE commitments in areas including freedoms of peaceful assembly, association, and expression. We urge restraint and avoidance of violence by all in the post election period. We remain committed

to supporting the people of Azerbaijan and working with the Government to further efforts to achieve Azerbaijan's full potential as a stable, prosperous, and democratic member of the international community.

We urge the authorities to conduct a transparent, credible investigation of all reported electoral violations and to implement the recommendations made in ODIHR's final report.

Finally, we note with deep concern the statements by some elements of the OSCE and participating States that appear to call into question the role of ODIHR and the Parliamentary Assembly and our obligations as participating States in the field of democratic elections and observation. At the 1999 Istanbul Summit, participating States made a clear commitment to election observation and to abide by the recommendations of ODIHR and the Parliamentary Assembly. In particular, at Istanbul, participating States reaffirmed "our obligation to conduct free and fair elections in accordance with OSCE commitments, in particular the 1990 Copenhagen Document. We recognize the assistance the ODIHR can provide to participating States in developing and implementing electoral legislation. In line with these commitments, we will invite observers to our elections from other participating States, the ODIHR, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and appropriate institutions and organizations that wish to observe our election proceedings. We agree to follow up promptly the ODIHR's election assessment and recommendations."

It is troubling to us that some chose to overlook that the joint ODIHR/PA report found "significant problems were observed throughout all stages of election day processes and underscored the serious nature of the shortcomings that need to be addressed in order for Azerbaijan to fully meet its OSCE commitments for genuine and democratic standards." ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly worked closely together to uphold the OSCE gold-standard of impartial election monitoring and deserve the full support of all participating States and OSCE bodies.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.