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United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Address by H.E. Kanat B. Saudabayev, Secretary of State of Kazakhstan

As prepared for delivery by Chargé d' Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, Secretary Saudabayev, for coming to the Permanent Council today to share with us your government's views on the reform process in Kazakhstan and your country's aspirations to lead this organization.

As you know, the United States was very interested in your country's August 18th parliamentary elections. As a country that strongly supports the process of democratization in Kazakhstan and around the world, the United States believes that free and fair elections are a crucial component of democracy. We welcomed indicators of progress during the August elections, but also shared the serious concerns of the observer missions about the electoral legislation and a process that fell short of international standards.

The issue of Kazakhstan's bid for the 2009 Chairmanship of this organization has been under discussion in various OSCE fora for quite some time now. The United States welcomes Kazakhstan's aspiration to serve as Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE. As the OSCE Ministerial Council concluded in Brussels last December, any country applying for the Chairmanship of the OSCE must exemplify the principles of the Organization. It is important for this organization as well as for Kazakhstan that it demonstrate fully this commitment by taking actions to advance democratic reforms, including passing election laws that comply with OSCE standards and implementing these in practice, direct election of local authorities, and an easing of registration requirements for political parties.

I wish to underscore that the United States remains committed to helping Kazakhstan meet the spirit and the letter of the OSCE principles it has pledged to uphold. We look forward to working with your government as Kazakhstan strives to meet the high standards expected of any candidate country for the OSCE Chairmanship.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.