



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

### **Response to Russia's Criticism of ODIHR Election Observation**

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Kate M. Byrnes  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
April 27, 2017

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Russian Federation's claim that ODIHR's determination regarding how to observe the French elections is another example of an "unbalanced" approach by ODIHR is unjustified and misleading. We reject the simplistic and deceptive "east and west of Vienna" formula Russia is often applying to our discussions, as it suggests there are two "blocs" in the OSCE. Our present situation is not one of two blocs, but rather of an overwhelming majority of states that work in good faith to build an effective international system, and an isolated few that seek to undermine it.

ODIHR applies the same Needs Assessment Mission methodology to all elections. Based on ODIHR's assessment of its meetings with a broad range of stakeholders in a given country, ODIHR determines whether to deploy an election observation activity and what format would add the most value. ODIHR's needs-based methodology ensures it can accomplish the task that we, the participating States, have mandated it to achieve: professional, unbiased, and independent long-term and comprehensive election observation.

Besides applying the same Needs Assessment Mission methodology to all elections, it is well known that ODIHR has for years reiterated its interest in and readiness to deploy more comprehensive election observation activities to more countries. In order to accomplish this, ODIHR needs more resources and more seconded observers from participating States, something Russia has opposed for years during budget negotiations. Furthermore, Russia does not contribute seconded observers to elections in the countries it claims deserve more attention.

Let me close by reiterating a point we have made repeatedly: we stand by ODIHR and its election observation methodology, and encourage all states to support ODIHR election observation efforts in line with our shared OSCE commitments.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

###