



United States Mission to the OSCE

Presidential Election in Belarus

As delivered by Deputy Chief of Mission Kate Byrnes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 15, 2015

The United States joins other participating States in welcoming the peaceful conduct of the October 11 presidential election in Belarus. We were, however, disappointed that the election fell significantly short of Belarus' OSCE commitments and international standards for holding democratic elections, as demonstrated by reports from the OSCE ODIHR and Parliamentary Assembly election observation mission. These reports noted serious problems with the counting and tabulation of votes and the composition of territorial and precinct election commissions, as well as a lack of fundamental reform to Belarus' flawed legal framework governing elections.

A free and vibrant media, space for civil society organizations and opposition parties to operate, and full access for international and domestic election observers are essential to ensuring free and fair elections. We commend the participation of opposition political parties and independent media, but the inability of international and domestic monitors to observe the vote count, and the almost complete absence of opposition party or independent members on election commissions, are inconsistent with these democratic processes and norms.

The United States urges the government of Belarus to take action on the OSCE's recommendations ahead of 2016 parliamentary elections. We stand ready to work with the Belarusian government, Belarusian civil society, OSCE institutions, and other OSCE participating States to help Belarus bring its electoral system into conformity with its international obligations and OSCE commitments with respect to free and fair democratic elections that express accurately the will of the people.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.