United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Local Elections in Ukraine

As delivered by Political Counselor Casey Christensen
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 4, 2010

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Preliminary reports from election monitors unfortunately suggest that Ukraine's October 31 local elections did not meet standards for openness and fairness set by the presidential elections earlier this year. Domestic and international election observation efforts, most notably those led by the widely-respected domestic, non-partisan monitor OPORA, reported numerous procedural violations on Election Day. While election observers recognized improvements in the accuracy of voters' lists since the presidential contest, they also noted organizational shortcomings, such as insufficient training for electoral commission members, which contributed to the procedural violations and to other problems.

Ukraine's local election law, passed in July, was cited as a source of problems on Election Day by election observers and international experts. Some difficulties precipitated by the new law, such as blocking the participation of new parties, were lessened or ended by the revisions ordered by President Yanukovych in September. However, other aspects of the law and of pre-election regulations and procedures impeded the placement of the names of some candidates on ballots, allowed for reported cases of improper use of administrative resources during the electoral campaign, established unbalanced electoral commission membership, and created complicated registration and voting procedures.

President Yanukovych has recognized the need to bring electoral legislation into line with international standards through a consultative process. The United States is prepared to assist Ukraine in support of electoral code reform. We understand that the Council of Europe has offered assistance. We note that ODIHR's Democratization Department also has expertise in this area.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.