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

### **Statement on the Russian Presidential Elections**

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
March 6, 2008

Mr. Chairman,

First Deputy Prime Minister Dmitriy Medvedev will be the next president of the Russian Federation. We take positive note of President-elect Medvedev's call for respect for the rule of law, the importance of addressing corruption, and his campaign endorsement of "freedom of self expression," including independent media. We urge him, once he takes office, to take concrete steps to promote these principles and the development of democratic institutions. These steps - as he himself has pointed out - serve Russia's interests and are also core elements of Russia's international commitments.

President-elect Medvedev's statements are all the more important given that the electoral process during the presidential elections did not meet many internationally accepted standards for the conduct of democratic elections. We share the views expressed by many independent observers in Russia and Europe, including the assessment of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, which expressed concern about the registration process, particularly barriers faced by opposition candidates and the lack of equal access of candidates to the media. Secretary Rice has addressed our concerns on December 11, 2007 and they remain valid.

We also regret ODIHR was forced to conclude that an effective observation mission was not possible.

The United States and the Russian Federation share important strategic interests and the United States stands ready to work constructively with the new Russian Administration. We hope to work closely with President-elect Medvedev to address our mutual concerns over international terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the settlement of regional and sectarian conflicts, and global issues involving health, energy security, and the environment.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.