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EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 930
Vienna, 15 November 2012**

EU statement on the presidential election in the USA

The European Union welcomes the early invitation extended to OSCE/ODIHR to observe the 6 November general elections in the United States. We take careful note of the statement of preliminary findings issued by ODIHR and the preliminary post-election statement issued by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in the wake of these elections.

The EU welcomes that these elections took place in a pluralistic environment, were highly competitive, were administered in a professional manner, and enjoyed the trust of majority of stakeholders as well as broad public confidence. We concur with the assessment of international observers that the 6 November general elections demonstrated the United States' commitment to democracy and that voters were given a genuine opportunity to make an informed choice between the candidates.

We also welcome that the elections were covered extensively in a pluralistic and diverse media, which enjoys a robust system of guarantees protecting freedom of speech and freedom of the press, allowing voters to make informed choices. We welcome that there exist many avenues to seek legal redress for complaints regarding the electoral process.

At the same time, we take note of those aspects of the electoral process where improvements could be made, such as voting rights, accuracy of voter lists, transparency in campaign financing, recount procedures and access of international election observers. We particularly note the high number of citizens ineligible to vote because of a criminal record as well as the significant number of eligible voters who were not registered to vote. We call on the United States to make more efforts to ensure that international observers have full access to all polling stations. We also call on the United States to take into account the specific concerns raised by ODIHR and to ensure appropriate follow-up to its recommendations.

Lastly, we wish to reiterate our regret that ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly issued separate statements after the US elections. We stress that issuing separate statements reflects poorly on the OSCE as a whole. We therefore reiterate our call on the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to remain committed, together with the ODIHR, to co-operation and complementarity in their work, in line with the 1997 Cooperation Agreement as well as MC Decision 19/06.

To conclude, we wish to thank the US delegation for its statement last week on this issue and look forward to hearing how the recommendations of international observers will be followed-up.

The Acceding Country Croatia*, the Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Iceland+ and Serbia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.