



United States Mission to the OSCE

Right of Reply to the Russian Federation Defending ODIHR's Election Methodology

As delivered by Acting Political Counselor Andrew Shepard
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 23, 2021

In response to my Russian colleagues' comments on ODIHR's election methodology, I would like to underscore that the United States fully supports ODIHR's independence and autonomy in reaching its professional conclusion that "the decision by the Russian authorities to introduce limitations to the election observation made credible independent observation impossible." We also fully support the OSCE *Parliamentary Assembly* in its determination that it could not observe under these circumstances.

ODIHR meticulously gathers and analyzes objective criteria when conducting a *Needs Assessment* of the size and format necessary for a mission to effectively observe any election.

In each individual case, ODIHR impartially determines the appropriate number of Long-Term and Short-Term Observers required to conduct a credible OSCE Election Observation Mission while maintaining the highest professional standards. Each deployment plan designed and proposed by ODIHR is specifically tailored to that country, that moment, and, in this case, that epidemiological situation. It is therefore irrelevant to compare the particulars of other *Election Observation Missions* with the one ODIHR proposed for Russia this month.

We hoped Russia, having invited the OSCE to observe the September Duma elections, would engage in good faith and work with ODIHR on practical arrangements to facilitate the observation mission, especially in light of the pandemic situation. Successfully hosting an OSCE Election Observation Mission demonstrates a participating State's confidence in its own elections process. It is also an opportunity to benefit from ODIHR's technical expertise with a view to improving one's electoral process. We can ALL improve our electoral processes and should not be afraid of constructive feedback.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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