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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

8 March 2012

Regarding the outcome of the presidential elections in Russia

Mr. Chairperson,

We have listened carefully to the statements by a number of delegations with their assessments of the presidential elections in our country. For our part, we should like to provide more detailed information about the principal outcomes of the recent election campaign.

Yesterday the Russian Central Election Commission (CEC) released the final results of the election. The winner was Vladimir Putin, who gained more than 63 per cent of the votes cast. A total of 45,602,000 citizens of our country voted for him. Furthermore, the electoral turnout exceeded 65 per cent, which is 5 per cent higher than at the State Duma elections held in December 2011.

The elections just held were characterized by an unprecedented level of transparency. Almost all the polling stations were equipped with webcams, which broadcast the entire voting process on the Internet and at the headquarters of the presidential candidates. Thus, Russia was the first country in the world where all those wishing to do so could follow all stages of the voting process in real time.

Also for the first time around 300,000 Russian election observers representing the main political parties and various civil society associations monitored the elections.

Close to 700 observers from 56 countries and 7 international organizations attentively monitored the election campaign in our country. The Russian authorities ensured as favourable conditions as possible for their work. The Russian CEC in co-operation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs promptly dealt with the issuing of entry visas and the accreditation of observers. As a goodwill gesture, all persons involved in monitoring the elections were exempt from paying visa fees. Despite the tight deadline, it proved possible to quickly resolve matters regarding the arrival and accreditation of representatives of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

The largest international monitoring mission was sent by the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States. In assessing the elections, the mission noted that they were transparent, proceeded in an atmosphere of open competition and in accordance with democratic standards, and demonstrated the existence of genuine political pluralism in Russia. Representatives of a number of other international organizations gave similar assessments. It is noteworthy that a group of independent international observers consisting of more than 50 representatives from 21 European countries and the United States of America also drew positive conclusions. This group included recognized experts in the protection of political and electoral rights, who had been invited by Russian non-governmental organizations. According to one of the representatives of this group, Kline Preston, the elections were generally in keeping with international standards, and no one could question their honesty.

As you are aware, the joint mission sent by the OSCE and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has presented its preliminary findings and conclusions. For the most part they appear to be balanced, although there are contentious assessments on a number of questions. This is not just the opinion of Russia, but also that of independent observers. For example, the Member of the European Parliament from the *Bündnis Zukunft Österreich*, Ewald Stadler, who was observing the electoral process in Samara, called the OSCE experts' findings regarding massive vote rigging "absolute rubbish" and referred to this as an attempt to deliberately slander Russia.

It is worth noting that statement by the representative of the United States focused for the most part on the negative aspects of the findings by the OSCE/ODIHR mission. I should like to point out that violations occur in any country, including in the United States. In this connection, we shall reserve the right to return to this subject at a subsequent Permanent Council meeting.

I should like to underscore that no international mission called into question the legitimacy of the election results or their conformity with recognized electoral standards. In this connection, they mention the good level of preparation for and conduct of the election campaign, the effective work of the Russian Central Election Commission, the active participation of civil society in observing the elections and the important role of video monitoring in ensuring the transparency of the elections. As for the complaints about violations submitted in accordance with the established procedure, they will be carefully investigated and the guilty parties punished.

In conclusion, I should like to mention that the Heads of State or Government of many countries around the world have congratulated Vladimir Putin on his convincing victory.

Thank you for your attention.