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United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Kazakh Elections

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
December 15, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We share the view of the OSCE observer mission in its preliminary report that the December 4 presidential election in Kazakhstan showed some improvements over previous ones, but did not meet a number of international standards and OSCE commitments.

This was a disappointment. I am sure it was a disappointment to states that were interested in the successful election process in Kazakhstan, as well as it must have been to those in Kazakhstan who I believe truly worked to make this a successful election.

On a positive note, there were five candidates running for the presidency, two of whom were leading opposition figures, and there was greater access for domestic observers and closer cooperation with the OSCE observer mission. In addition, the Central Election Commission displayed increased transparency by publicizing voter registration lists and most decisions on its web site.

However, serious shortcomings included restrictions on campaigning, harassment of opposition and independent media, and media bias in favor of President Nazarbayev, and flaws in the vote count and tabulation.

Perhaps overly zealous supporters of the apparently popular president would be well advised to let nature take its course.

Our assessment is that, while this election reflected the will of Kazakhstan's voters, bringing Kazakh laws and practices in line with OSCE standards will require political will and considerable effort, as well as credible investigations of irregularities, and prosecution of those suspected of violating electoral law.

We urge the Government of Kazakhstan to respond promptly to complaints and appeals related to violation of the election law.

The United States looks forward to working with the citizens, civil society, and the Government of Kazakhstan to strengthen democratic practices and institutions. We only want you to win.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.