



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Georgia's Presidential Election

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 31, 2013

The United States congratulates the people of Georgia on their presidential election on October 27. This election was an important milestone in further consolidating the country's democratic transition and in advancing its Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

The United States also welcomes the preliminary conclusions of the International Election Observation Mission Report, which found that "voters were able to express their choice freely". As the report makes clear, "fundamental freedoms of expression, movement and assembly were respected and candidates were able to campaign without restriction." The professional organization and conduct of this election is particularly noteworthy. This election demonstrates the commitment of the people of Georgia to choosing their future.

The campaign environment was not without challenges, however. We encourage the authorities to take measures to address and prevent the recurrence of issues identified in the findings of the International Election Observation Mission. These include inconsistent application of the election code; allegations of political pressure at the local level; the denial of registration of candidates; and delayed responses to campaign finance violations.

We thank the government of Georgia for its close cooperation with the International Election Observation Mission. After more than two decades of democratic transformation, Georgia continues to serve as a positive example for emerging democracies. This report will serve as an important tool for Georgia to make further progress towards this goal.

Finally, the United States is proud to have contributed two long-term and 20 short-term election observers to this mission. We express our appreciation for the wide-range of support to the election observation mission provided by other participating States. We also welcome the co-operation between ODIHR, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and others.

The hard work of consolidating democracy does not end with a presidential election. Governments are judged not only by what leaders say, but what they do. We encourage Georgia to continue to strengthen the rule of law; raise human rights standards; foster an environment fully conducive to pluralism and tolerant of members of minority groups; promote transparent and accountable governance; boost economic development; and work toward sustained, inclusive democratic reform.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.