



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the Presidential Election in Kyrgyzstan

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Hugh Neighbour
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 30, 2009

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

The United States is concerned about the conduct of the presidential election in Kyrgyzstan held on July 23rd, which despite some positive elements failed to meet key OSCE commitments for democratic elections.

We take note of positive aspects of the election process as outlined by the OSCE Election Observation Mission's preliminary assessment, including that voters were offered distinct choices of presidential candidates, that civil society remained actively engaged in the electoral process, that broadcast media complied with obligations to provide free airtime to candidates, and that deadlines regarding the election administration and the courts were generally respected. We also take note that the Central Election Commission increased the transparency of the process by publishing information on campaign spending and took an active role in launching national voter participation and education campaigns.

None the less, we remain concerned that there were a number of serious shortcomings in the election process. The election campaign period was marred by a blurring of the line between party and state, in which misuse of administrative resources in support of the incumbent's campaign granted him an unfair advantage. For example, according to Interim Report No. 2 (22 June – 4 July 2009), opposition and civil society activists criticized the President for locating his party offices within state administrative premises. Also of serious concern are allegations that the local administrative staff and party activists of the governing political party pressured or intimidated voters and election commissioners.

We further note that the broadcast media provided limited and unbalanced coverage of election contestants, and that there was a rise in violence against reporters in the run-up to the election.

The United States is also concerned by reports that the Central Election Commission's work sometimes lacked transparency and that Precinct Election Commission members in some locations denied access to international monitors to observe meetings, as well as the vote count and tabulation.

On election day, some OSCE observers witnessed ballot box stuffing, inaccuracies in the voter lists, as well as evidence of multiple voting and open vote-buying. The closing, counting and tabulation process saw a further deterioration with OSCE observers submitting negative evaluations for more than half of the counts observed.

We encourage the election commission, courts, prosecutors and the police to respond to and resolve complaints fairly and transparently. We also encourage Kyrgyz opposition parties and authorities to resolve differences peacefully and constructively, and to refrain from using threats or violence.

Finally, the United States takes note of Kyrgyzstan's inclusion of a number of international and domestic election monitoring teams, including an ODIHR long-term and short-term observation mission and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. We want to thank the OSCE Election Observation Mission for bringing to these elections an unbiased and professional monitoring team. We appreciate, as always, the hard work the mission put into releasing a timely and thorough preliminary report.

Madam Chairwoman, the United States believes the Kyrgyz Republic has made encouraging strides in its 18 years of independence. We had looked forward to seeing additional progress in this presidential election, as we did in the 2005 presidential election. We believe the Government of Kyrgyzstan can move forward on its path toward greater democracy for its citizens by improving its electoral process. We strongly encourage the government to take OSCE's recommendations in its final report into consideration and to work on reforms in consultation with civil society, opposition parties, and the international community.

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.