



United States Mission to the OSCE

Early Parliamentary Elections in Azerbaijan

As delivered by Political Councilor Lane Darnell Bahl
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 13, 2020

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The United States notes with concern that the preliminary report of the OSCE International Election Observation Mission assessed Azerbaijan's "restrictive legislation and political environment prevented genuine competition" in the February 9 parliamentary elections.

The OSCE preliminary report noted that despite a high number of candidates, most candidates did not present genuine alternatives to the ruling party's policies. The report assessed the election was "devoid of [the] political engagement that is essential to a competitive environment in which voters have a genuine choice." We were disappointed by significant procedural problems observed on Election Day, including ballot box stuffing, group voting, disregard for reconciliation procedures, and limited transparency during vote counting.

The United States condemns the use of violence or mistreatment of peaceful protesters or journalists under any circumstances and calls on Azerbaijani authorities to respect the freedom of peaceful assembly following the elections and investigate all alleged instances of such violence or mistreatment.

Elections are not just about what happens on Election Day. What comes before and after Election Day is just as essential to the integrity and legitimacy of the process as ensuring access to polling stations and an appropriately transparent tabulation. We therefore urge fair and transparent review of all election grievances submitted following the elections.

Those elected are expected to represent and be accountable to the public. Also crucial is an environment in which people can freely express their opinions and a pluralistic and independent media can keep the public informed.

ODIHR's elections observation methodology has a sterling reputation among regional organizations, governments, civil society, and the public. Together with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, ODIHR delivers high-quality election observation that offers independent and transparent reporting on participating States' electoral processes.

We urge the government of Azerbaijan to review the OSCE preliminary report and take action on the issues it highlights to align Azerbaijan's elections processes with Azerbaijan's OSCE commitments and international obligations.

The United States wishes Azerbaijan success and progress for its democratic processes, as it does for participating states in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and all areas of the OSCE. We remain committed to working with the government and people of Azerbaijan to ensure a strong, stable, democratic, and prosperous future.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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