



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Elections in Kyrgyzstan

As delivered by Chargé d' Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
December 21, 2007

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Kyrgyz Republic has made encouraging strides in democratic reform since becoming an independent nation sixteen years ago. We had hoped to see additional progress in the December 16 parliamentary elections, as we had seen in the 2005 presidential election, but regrettably this was not the case. The United States is concerned about the conduct of the elections in Kyrgyzstan held this past Sunday. We agree with ODIHR's assessment that these elections fell short of international standards.

We appreciate the cooperation given by Kyrgyzstan to ODIHR observers, and take note of positive aspects of the election process as outlined by ODIHR's preliminary assessment. The Central Election Commission generally worked in an open manner, political parties were involved to some degree in the election administration, and challenges to the courts took place within legal deadlines and were held publicly. The government introduced new gender, youth, and national minority quotas to boost the stature of underrepresented groups in parliament, and the election campaign took place in a calm environment that was largely free from violence. It is also positive that the OSCE Short Term Observers, in the more than 800 polling stations they visited, evaluated the work of the polling station election commissions as good or very good in over 90 percent of cases.

Nevertheless, there were a number of shortcomings in the election process. The election campaign was marred by significant obstacles for opposition parties and the use of government resources to benefit specific political interests, including unbalanced media coverage. Widespread irregularities were observed concerning the vote count, the late exclusion of many voters from voter registration lists, ballot box stuffing, pressure on voters, organized bussing of voters, exaggerated reports of voter turnout and the questionable revision of precinct vote protocols. Further, uncertainty over election rules and procedures undermined transparency of the electoral process.

We encourage the election commission, courts, prosecutors and the police to respond to and resolve complaints fairly and transparently.

Finally, we again take note of Kyrgyzstan's invitations to a number of election monitoring teams, including an ODIHR long-term and short-term observation mission, and the good cooperation given to ODIHR observers in the run-up to and on the day of the election. We also want to thank ODIHR for bringing to these elections an unbiased and professional monitoring team. We appreciate, as always, the hard work ODIHR put into releasing a timely and thorough preliminary report.

Mr. Chairman, we believe the Government of Kyrgyzstan can move forward on its path toward greater democracy for its citizens by improving its electoral process and removing arbitrary obstacles for parties to enter parliament. We encourage the government to consider seriously OSCE/ODIHR recommendations in its final report and to work on reforms in consultation with civil society, opposition parties, and the international community. The United States also remains committed to working with the Government and people of the Kyrgyz Republic in these areas.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.