



## United States Mission to the OSCE

### Statement on Ukraine

As delivered by Deputy Permanent Representative Douglas Davidson  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
November 20, 2003

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States Ambassador to Ukraine has conveyed, on numerous occasions, including at the highest levels, concerns of the United States regarding recent incidents involving obstacles to free assembly, to free speech and in general to a free and fair political campaign in Donetsk, Sumy and elsewhere in Ukraine.

Interference in the exercise of such rights, especially at the behest of government officials - whether local or national - runs contrary to Ukraine's stated commitment to democracy and to international human rights norms and agreements to which Ukraine has subscribed. Events since Donetsk and Sumy, including in Lutsk and Simferopol give cause for further concern.

Looking toward the October 2004 presidential election, it is the hope of the United States that Ukraine will do all it can to ensure a level playing field. This includes:

- ensuring balanced electoral commissions;
- allowing domestic and international election monitors to operate freely;
- upholding freedom of the media, association and assembly;
- ensuring equitable media access to all candidates;
- ensuring that legislation regulating media, including the Internet, conforms to OSCE standards;
- ensuring that independent journalists are not threatened, beaten, fired, harassed or killed;
- conducting full and transparent investigations of any media freedom transgressions (including prior murders of journalists such as Heorhiy Gongadze and holding the perpetrators accountable);
- ceasing interference with independent media outlets through the use of *temniks* and harassment via tax audits, license revocations and libel suits;

- decriminalizing libel; and
- updating outdated voter registers.

As Ukraine proceeds on its Euro-Atlantic integration course, the conduct of its presidential election will be a crucial factor in how Ukraine's progress is assessed.

Thank you very much.