



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the May 30 Municipal Elections in Georgia

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 10, 2010

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States congratulates the people of Georgia on the conduct of municipal elections on May 30, evaluated by the ODIHR and Council of Europe International Election Observation Mission as marking evident progress towards meeting OSCE and Council of Europe standards for democratic elections.

We observed technical improvements in the administration of elections on election day, although we also observed irregularities in individual precincts of some regions and note concerns highlighted by ODIHR regarding the vote counting and tabulation processes in some precincts and districts.

We are encouraged by the Central Election Commission's efforts to increase transparency and responsiveness to electoral concerns. We highlight the commitment of the government's inter-agency task force to engage with political parties and civil society on election-related issues. These efforts marked an important step forward in the democratic process. However, as noted by Georgian NGOs, more remains to be done, especially at lower-level electoral commissions.

We also agree with ODIHR that significant shortcomings need to be addressed. We share concerns reported during the campaign of the misuse of administrative resources, a lack of impartiality of media coverage, instances of intimidation of opposition parties and candidates, and inaccuracies in the voters' list, although ODIHR highlighted the considerable efforts made to improve the list's quality.

We urge the Georgian Government and other authorities responsible for the electoral process to build on the conduct of these elections by working with all concerned to address these challenges and shortcomings and to implement ODIHR recommendations. Doing so would advance democratic parliamentary elections in 2012 and a presidential election in 2013, which would result in the first peaceful, constitutional, and democratic transition of presidential power in Georgian history.

Conducting democratic elections that meet OSCE standards is important for Georgia's future as it pursues a path of European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

We look forward to continuing our partnership with the Georgian Government, political parties, and civil society to promote democratic elections and processes. And Mr. Chairman, I'll note that we reserve the right to comment on the Geneva Discussions at a later date.

Thank you.