



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the Invitation by the Russian Federation for International Observers for the Duma Elections

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a. i. Gary Robbins
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 13, 2011

The United States welcomes the timely invitation by the Russian Federation Central Election Commission for international observers, including an Election Observation Mission from OSCE/ODIHR and Parliamentary Assembly, for the December 4 State Duma elections.

Free and fair elections that adhere to international standards are a necessary part of a healthy democracy. OSCE's participating States have an obligation to ensure that elections throughout the region meet these standards and that citizens have the freedom to cast their votes. We are committed to the support of free and fair electoral processes that allow political parties to operate freely, that allow citizens to exercise their right to peaceful assembly and protest, that enshrine the importance of an independent media, and that enjoy the protections of an effective judicial system.

All OSCE participating States have committed themselves to the implementation of free and fair elections. As set forth in the 1990 Copenhagen Document—and reaffirmed at the Astana Summit—this includes universal and equal suffrage; secret ballots; and non-discriminatory access for parties to the media.

Domestic and foreign observers play a critical role in documenting that these principles are upheld during elections, and ODIHR has become the gold standard for election observation.

We urge all participating States to support the secondment of long-term observers to follow the elections process throughout Russia and to contribute to the provision of short-term observers to follow Election Day proceedings. We would also welcome robust participation by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. We urge the Russian Federation to facilitate timely visa issuance to all Mission members.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.