



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Early Elections in Kazakhstan

As delivered by Charge d'Affaires Carol Fuller
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 3, 2011

The United States wishes to thank Ambassador Abdrakhmanov for his statement this morning announcing an intention to change the scheduled date of presidential elections in Kazakhstan.

Last month in Washington, and in Astana, and here in the Permanent Council, the United States registered its concern about plans to cancel presidential elections in Kazakhstan and replace them with a referendum. Therefore today, we welcome the decision not to hold a referendum and that presidential elections will indeed be held in Kazakhstan, albeit in 2011 and not as scheduled in 2012.

We remain convinced that openly competed, free and fair elections are the best guarantor of democratic governance and the rule of law. Regular, periodic elections provide a predictable avenue for potential candidates and opposition parties to prepare and to present the electorate with real choices. It will be particularly important to ensure that the timing and modalities of any early election provide opportunity for a fairly competed election, in accordance with OSCE principles.

During Kazakhstan's now twenty years of independence, its elections have never fully measured up to international standards for free and fair elections, according to ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. Since the last presidential election in 2005, Kazakhstan has taken steps toward democracy, and the decision this week by the Constitutional Council to reject the proposed amendments on constitutional grounds is one such example. The upcoming presidential election represents another important opportunity. Democracy and the rule of law require adherence to the fundamental commitments to which we have all pledged. To this end, we strongly encourage Kazakhstan to complete the promised reforms of its electoral, political parties and media laws before the presidential election takes place. It is of central importance that any elections in Kazakhstan be administered in such a way as to give full support and expression to these commitments.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.