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**STATEMENT BY
MR. MAXIM BUYAKEVICH, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1422nd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

11 May 2023

**On the final report of the ODIHR observers about the midterm congressional elections
in the United States of America**

Mr. Chairperson,

We have familiarized ourselves with the final report of the Limited Election Observation Mission deployed by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) to observe the midterm congressional elections in the United States of America in November 2022. We should like to comment on that report.

The lecturing attitude of the US Government towards other participating States is well known. We have repeatedly heard here persistent calls for the Office's electoral recommendations, presented as "impartial" assessments by an "independent" body, to be implemented. However, the United States itself is in no hurry to put them into practice – the ODIHR notes that none of its priority recommendations have been implemented since the 2020 general election. It appears that the United States does not even intend to take these recommendations into account.

Here are some concrete examples. The ODIHR notes that international election observation is fully enshrined in legislation only in eleven states and in the federal District of Columbia. In 15 states access for observers is prohibited altogether. We would remind you that we are talking about the self-appointed bastion of democracy! Furthermore, there are serious restrictions on election monitoring by non-partisan observers as well. This is a violation of the basic commitment under paragraph 8 of the CSCE Copenhagen Document of 1990.

Claims that the federal Government sought to implement this commitment, but that the states are free to do as they wish do not stand up to scrutiny. The international obligations to admit – and not just invite – observers were assumed by the federal Government, which should also ensure that they are fully implemented. Attempts to hide behind "state laws" merely make one wonder and ask oneself the logical question: why did the US Government sign the Copenhagen Document in the first place?

Also interesting is the passage in the ODIHR report about the politicized and non-transparent nature of the process of redistricting in the United States, which is clearly racially tinged. It is not particularly clear

how the active use of such a crude election technique correlates with the “purity” of American democracy, on which the US Government likes to hold forth.

Not to mention the disenfranchisement of millions of US citizens, which is quite outrageous from the point of view of the civilized world. This violates the principle of universal suffrage enshrined in a number of international commitments, not least in the framework of the OSCE. Such discrimination again bears the hallmarks of systemic US racism: the ODIHR acknowledges that the brunt of some restrictions is traditionally borne by African Americans. It is the same when it comes to people with disabilities: to this day, in 40 states, people with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities and those who are under guardianship face restrictions on their voting rights. Violations of several other human rights obligations have also been identified in many other respects too.

International bodies have pointed out these inconsistencies to the United States, including in relation to electoral processes. The serious reservations voiced by the United Nations Human Rights Council have lost none of their relevance. Its Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review issued a report in December 2020 containing a selection of 350 recommendations. Restrictions on the voting rights of racial minorities, as well as the norms adopted in some states allowing party representatives to interfere in elections, have also been repeatedly flagged by international non-governmental organizations.

Even the concerns of the country’s own citizens are being ignored. In particular, Edison Research conducted a poll for the television channel CNN among US citizens who voted in the elections on 8 November 2022. Of the respondents, 20 per cent said they had little or no confidence at all in the fairness of the elections, while 70 per cent admitted that they felt democracy in the United States was “somewhat” or “very” threatened.

In view of these and other factors, and given the number of comments and their content, also from other organizations, we are surprised at the unexpectedly positive conclusion by the ODIHR regarding the supposedly competitive nature of the elections and how they were well managed. The same goes for the attempts to cover up the electoral shortcomings with general positive conclusions and to turn a blind eye completely to a number of egregious points. For example, the fact that the law permits the mass transportation of voters [to polling stations] in the United States. The Office has harshly criticized other OSCE participating States for this, but not a word about it here.

The blatant pandering to one of the country’s political forces is also striking – the ODIHR arbitrarily issues verdicts on the untenability of the electoral rhetoric of some candidates, brushing aside any criticism of the electoral process or of serious violations on election day. This partiality of the ODIHR Mission violates one of the basic principles of the Code of Conduct for ODIHR Election Observers. It clearly stipulates that “observers will maintain strict impartiality in the conduct of their duties and will, at no time, ... express ... any bias or preference in relation to [national] authorities, parties, candidates, or with reference to any issues in contention in the election process.” The ODIHR’s failure to implement the basics of its methodology once again demonstrates that the “gold standard” is a myth. What is needed is a return to the task of developing uniform and consensus-based rules for the monitoring of elections.

The report presented – albeit with certain reservations – makes it clear that the US Government no longer has the moral right to lecture other countries about democracy with its inherent arrogance and from the pulpit of its “exceptionalism”. The United States does not meet democratic principles and norms in any way – the “beacon of democracy” is bust and requires a complete overhaul. Although there should be no illusions – we are talking, after all, about a police state with an archaic form of government.

Thank you for your attention.