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United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the Russian Presidential Election

As delivered by Political Counselor Christopher Robinson
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 8, 2012

The United States congratulates the Russian people on the completion of the Presidential election, and looks forward to working with the President-elect after he is sworn in. We were encouraged to see so many Russian citizens voting, monitoring voting in their local precincts, exercising their constitutional right to free assembly, and expressing their views peacefully about the political and electoral processes.

The United States endorses the preliminary report by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), which noted that while voting on election day was assessed positively overall, the process deteriorated during the vote count. Because of procedural irregularities, the count was assessed negatively in almost one-third of polling stations observed. The report also expressed concerns about the “onerous” candidate registration requirements, media bias during the campaign, and the partisan use of government resources, among other issues. We urge the Russian Government to conduct a transparent, credible investigation of all reported electoral violations and hold accountable those responsible.

The preliminary findings also cite steps taken by the Central Election Commission (CEC) to increase transparency of the voting process. We urge Russian authorities to build on these steps, and, more broadly, to follow through on political system reforms currently being considered by the Duma that will increase citizens’ confidence in future elections. Follow-through on these steps, such as reducing the barriers for registration of political parties and electoral candidates, is an important part of fulfilling OSCE commitments.

We commend the work of the International Election Observation Mission and that of other observers, and the support of the Russian Government for this mission. Not only in the Russian Federation, but throughout the OSCE region, the cooperation of ODIHR and the OSCE PA in this realm plays a valuable role in promoting democratic institutions and governance.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.