



United States Mission to the OSCE

Reply to the Russian Federation's Statement falsely claiming ODIHR's Electoral Methodology is a Means of Interference in the Internal Affairs of OSCE participating States

As delivered by Political Counselor Erin Webster-Main
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 26, 2024

The United States fully supports the work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the election observation missions it conducts. We value the thorough, professional, and impartial assessments of the observers and we take their recommendations seriously. The aim of ODIHR's election observation missions is to assess the extent to which the election environment is conducive to the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms and whether the elections process is characterized by equality, universality, political pluralism, confidence, transparency and accountability, which are objectives that all participating States should share.

For decades, the United States has invited OSCE observers to assess our own elections and encouraged fellow participating States to do the same. Whatever the false accusations made by the Russian representative and disparaging remarks about ODIHR, we know this to be true: Russia and Belarus have had a history of taking extraordinary steps to prevent free and fair elections. Russia's comments today and its February 2024 decision to deny OSCE Election Observers the opportunity to observe Russia's presidential election suggest that Russia does not see inviting respected, objective, international observers to assess the freeness and fairness of its election process as in its interest. Nor does the Kremlin seem to welcome independent Russian civil society organizations monitoring elections in their own country. Russia's longest-standing election monitoring organization Golos was one of the first targets of the Kremlin's "foreign agent" law in 2013. The Golos Movement's co-chairman, Grigory Melkonyants, has been held in pre-trial detention for over a year. We demand Russia ensures respect of all of his human rights and fundamental freedoms.

By inviting OSCE observers, we and other participating States demonstrate our commitment to democratic principles and reaffirm the great importance we attach to free and fair elections. We continue to hope for the day when Russia will live up to its OSCE human dimension commitments. The citizens of Russia deserve no less.

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