



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement in Response to the Report of Ambassador Roy Reeve, Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan

Delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Douglas A. Davidson
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 29, 2003

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to join my colleagues in welcoming Ambassador Reeve once again to the Permanent Council, and to thank him for his detailed and comprehensive report on the excellent work of his Office over the past seven months. I will comment on only a few of the subjects Ambassador Reeve has covered, but that does not in any way indicate a lesser interest on the part of the United States in the remainder of his report.

First of all, I would like to congratulate Ambassador Reeve and his staff on their very fruitful work in supporting electoral reform and in strengthening election administration in Armenia. I will later in the second part of my remarks address the parliamentary elections themselves. However, the OSCE Office in Yerevan deserves praise for its effective chairmanship of the International Working Group on Elections, for its role in improving voter lists, and for its timely procurement and delivery of transparent ballot boxes, twice and on extremely short notice.

It is also worth noting Ambassador Reeve's assessment of the very positive role played by the judiciary following both rounds of the presidential elections in Armenia. It is heartening to see both local courts and the Constitutional Courts taking an active interest in electoral appeals, and showing full willingness to criticize the executive branch for its shortcomings in election administration.

On the negative side, the United States shares the concern over the so-called "administrative detentions" following the presidential elections. We join Ambassador Reeve in urging the Armenian authorities to eliminate these obsolete Soviet-era procedures, and to develop and enact legislation that provides clear legal guarantees for the rights to freedom of speech and freedom of assembly that are already enshrined in the Armenian Constitution.

Mr. Chairman, the United States appreciates the new emphasis that the Office in Yerevan is placing on the military/security dimension, and particularly the efforts it is making in support of the global war on terrorism, including the economic dimension work to combat money laundering.

In the human dimension, we can only compliment the Office and its partners for the impressive campaign to improve public awareness of human rights issues. The joint ODIHR project with the Polish Helsinki Foundation deserves similar praise.

At this point, I should also like to note that I share Ambassador Reeve's belief that Poland and the other Central European states have a great deal of experience and knowledge to share with those states further east that are still engaged in the transition to democratic free market societies. I would encourage my Central European colleagues to seek even more ways to engage actively in this sort of project, as well as to encourage equally the OSCE and other donors to identify areas for partnership with them in such endeavors.

I should also like to thank Ambassador Reeve for his work in two areas to which the United States attaches particular importance, and those are protecting International Religious Freedom and combating Trafficking in Persons. As you know, we publish annual reports on both subjects covering the entire world, and the cooperation between the OSCE Office and the U.S. Embassy in Yerevan has contributed significantly to the accuracy and completeness of the entries relating to Armenia in both publications.

In closing this portion of my remarks, I would like to thank again not only Ambassador Reeve, but also his entire staff at the OSCE Office in Yerevan. As we have said before, this is arguably the best run field presence we have, and due credit should go to all those whose hard work has contributed to that reputation.

Thank you.