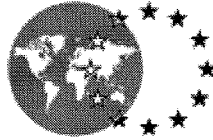


EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE



The Head of Division

Department: Russia, Eastern Partnership, Central Asia, Regional
Cooperation & OSCE
Division: Russia

Brussels, 02 MARS 2012
EEAS.III.B3./MK/id/Ares(2012)

Dear Petitioner,

Thank you for your petition dated 9 February 2012, concerning the State Duma and Presidential elections in Russia. The High Representative and Vice President of the European Commission Catherine Ashton has asked me to reply.

The European Union is committed to the principle of free and fair elections and has engaged in an active dialogue with the Russian Federation in this regard, all prior to, during, as well as in the aftermath of the Duma elections.

The High Representative/ Vice President has been personally actively involved in the dialogue, and has made her concerns clear over existing structural obstacles to the Russian citizens' full enjoyment of electoral rights.

On the occasion of the denial of registration for the Party of People's Freedom on June 22, 2011, High Representative Catherine Ashton issued a statement, noting her concern with constraints to political pluralism in the country. While regretting the belated effect of the initiative, we are happy to note that President Medvedev submitted to the Duma a draft bill easing the rules for registering political parties.

Following the State Duma elections the High Representative issued two more statements, one on the issue of irregularities in the election process, and another on the post-election demonstrations, expressing concern about the detention of hundreds of protesters demonstrating against alleged vote fraud in Duma elections, and about police violence against activists, journalists and bystanders.

The EU has followed closely both electoral campaigns, calling upon Russian authorities to, among other things, invite early a necessary number of international monitors, and provide full access to local observers.

All these messages were also passed during the EU-Russia Summit on December 15, 2011, while the issue of the people's electoral rights were also discussed during the EU-Russia human rights consultations, which met on November 29, 2011.

The EU urges Russia, on all occasions, to respect international commitments it has undertaken with regard to both free and fair elections as well as the right of the people to freedom of assembly and expression.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Pulch