(U) Public Messaging on Elections Under an America First Foreign Policy

1. (U) This message contains new guidance for domestic offices and overseas posts about public messaging related to foreign elections.

2. (U) Consistent with the administration's emphasis on national sovereignty, the Department will comment publicly on elections only when there is a clear and compelling U.S. foreign policy interest to do so. When it is appropriate to comment on a foreign election, our message should be brief, focused on congratulating the winning candidate and, when appropriate, noting shared foreign policy interests. Messages should avoid opining on the fairness or integrity of an electoral process, its legitimacy, or the democratic values of the country in question.

3. (U) President Trump clearly articulated his vision of an "America First" foreign policy in his Riyadh speech on May 13. The President praised the progress that comes from "sovereign countries, pursuing [their] own unique visions, and charting [their] own unique destinies in [their] own way." While the United States will hold firm to its own democratic values and celebrate those values when other countries choose a similar path, the President made clear that the United States will pursue partnerships with countries wherever our strategic interests align.

(U) Guidance for Election-Related Messaging from Washington

4. (SBU) The Department will not issue election-related statements or social media posts from Washington absent a clear and compelling foreign policy interest. In the event a post or the relevant regional bureau believes such a reason exists, the regional bureau's Front Office must *first* seek guidance from D, P, C, and S/P before preparing any such statements.

5. (SBU) Election-related messages from Washington generally should be from S or SPOX. Under no circumstances should others issue public messaging on elections absent explicit authorization from D, P, C, and S/P. The Secretary or Deputy Secretary may issue election-related statements or social media posts from Washington when in their judgement doing so advances U.S. foreign policy interests.

(U) Guidance for Election-Related Messaging from Overseas Posts

6. (SBU) Overseas posts may, without Washington clearance, post statements on their websites or social media properties, or make statements to local media to congratulate winners, unless the outcome of an election is publicly contested. Such messaging should focus on the outcome of an election, not the process. If posts have questions about appropriate messaging in particular cases, they should consult the press office in the relevant regional bureau.

7. (SBU) Posts are free to amplify messaging coming from official White House accounts or Department flagship accounts (i.e, S, D, SPOX, or StateDept). Posts that want to amplify any other election-related messaging (e.g., from Congressional accounts, international organizations, election observers, etc.) should first get clearance from the press office in the relevant regional bureau, which should seek guidance from D, P, C, and S/P.

(U) Denouncing Elections

8. (SBU) If a bureau or an overseas post wishes to issue statements denouncing the process or outcome of an election (e.g., violence during voting or sham elections), the relevant regional bureau's front office should first seek guidance from D, P, C, and S/P, as described in para 4. Such messages will be rare.

(U) Dos and Don'ts

9. (SBU) All drafters are encouraged as follows:
- DO use messaging on elections to advance a U.S. foreign policy goal; DON'T use it to promote an ideology.
- DO focus on outcomes (e.g., "congratulations to the President-elect"); DON'T comment on process (e.g., "elections were free and fair").
- DO evaluate draft election-related messaging according to President Trump's foreign policy agenda. Put another way: Would the President say it?
- DON'T use euphemisms to try and bypass this guidance.

10. (U) Please direct questions to your bureau's press office, which can seek further guidance from C, D, P, and S/P.