

Democracy and democratic elections in the OSCE region: UK statement

Madam Chair, I am grateful to the United States for putting this important item on our agenda today.

The United Kingdom has made it clear that democratic societies are the strongest supporters of an open and resilient international order. An order in which global institutions prove their ability to protect human rights, manage tensions, address conflict, instability and climate change, and share prosperity through trade and investment.

Democratic institutions and accountable governments are the foundations on which open, stable, and prosperous societies thrive. We believe it is the system of government that best allows for individual freedom and is the fairest way to govern human societies and states. Democracy rests on foundations that have to be built over time: strong institutions, responsible and accountable government, a free press, the rule of law and equal rights for all people.

However, the democratic world order faces a stark choice. Either we retreat and retrench in the face of malign actors or we work together and advance the cause of freedom. In this regard, the UK sees the role of the OSCE and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) as vital.

ODIHR's approach to elections is the right one. It starts from the simple premise that there should be continuous improvement in the process of holding democratic elections in all countries, as we all strive to achieve the standards to which we have committed as OSCE participating States. ODIHR's impartial and objective approach to each country helps improve its electoral processes in a tailored way, which builds on past success and addresses previous challenges.

We have, as 57 participating states, given ODIHR the mandate to independently observe elections. This includes a mandate to determine what is necessary in terms of size and format of a mission in order to effectively and credibly observe.

Madam Chair, all OSCE participating states must continue to support this mandate in order that ODIHR can continue to work effectively in supporting the development of free, fair and democratic elections. This in turn will enable us to continue to build and maintain democracy across our OSCE region.