

Parliamentary elections in Tajikistan: UK statement

We thank the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) Election Assessment Mission for their comprehensive report on the 2020 parliamentary elections in Tajikistan.

We note the report's observations, assessment and full set of recommendations. In particular we note with concern the assessment that the "elections in Tajikistan took place in a tightly controlled environment" and that "systemic infringements on fundamental political rights and freedoms have left no space for a pluralistic political debate, and genuine opposition has been removed from the political landscape".

This followed the Needs Assessment Mission report of December 2019, which stated that "the level of respect of fundamental freedoms has further deteriorated since the last elections and the choice between political alternatives is limited in the absence of independent media and a functioning opposition".

The ODIHR Final Report stated that despite legal changes enacted in 2017, 2018 and 2019 in Tajikistan, the recommendations made by the 2015 ODIHR Election Observation Mission have not been taken forward. As the 2020 Final Report notes, "all these shortcomings and infringements challenging the integrity and credibility of elections remained unaddressed, having a detrimental effect on the 2020 electoral process".

We support the Election Assessment Mission's report's seven priority recommendations that would enable Tajikistan to enhance its election process and bring it in line with OSCE commitments, as well as international obligations and standards.

We draw special attention to the importance of an open and inclusive review of the electoral legal framework, an independent Central Commission for Elections and Referenda (CCER) and the critical importance of freedom of the media and journalists at all times, especially when covering political issues. A free, independent and diverse media, online and offline, is crucial to the functioning of inclusive, peaceful and democratic societies.

We also fully support the report's practical recommendations aimed at improving accurate elector registration, independent election observation, strengthening procedures for counting and tabulating results and the timely publication of all election results disaggregated by polling station.

We encourage Tajikistan to consider these, along with the report's other 16 recommendations, and to further promote gender equality to enhance the representation of women in elected positions and political life generally. Finally, we strongly encourage the government of Tajikistan to take up ODIHR's offer of assistance to further improve the electoral process and

address these, and previous, recommendations from election-related activities. In support of this, we encourage an open, ongoing dialogue between the OSCE institutions, including ODIHR and the Representative on Freedom of the Media, and the government of Tajikistan.

As a valued partner, we stand ready to support Tajikistan and the OSCE in following-up on ODIHR's recommendations.