

# Statement by the Spokesperson on the announcement of Parliament

Today's announcement in Kabul by the Independent Electoral Commission of the date for Parliamentary elections in Afghanistan opens the way for an overdue step forward for democracy in the country.

The broad consultations with Afghan political stakeholders underline the Government's commitment to ensure a transparent electoral process. We expect the Independent Electoral Commission, political stakeholders and civil society to continue working closely together towards inclusive, transparent and credible elections, and to further democratic developments.

Key decisions on electoral reform will now have to be taken by the Afghan authorities in a timely manner. Broad-based political support for and clear communication on these reforms will help to restore public confidence in the elections and electoral bodies.

The European Union is committed to supporting the Afghan electoral process and the right of Afghan citizens to exercise their civic and democratic rights, and intends to adopt a €3.5 million project to strengthen Afghanistan's electoral institutions, funded under the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace. This project will help to enhance the integrity of the electoral process, and will complement existing and upcoming European Union electoral assistance in Afghanistan.

The European Union is committed to a peaceful, stable and democratic Afghanistan, to the benefit of all Afghans, of the region and beyond.