

The UK is concerned about democratic backsliding across the OSCE region

Thank you, Madam Moderator,

The United Kingdom believes that inclusive, democratic institutions and accountable governments are the foundations on which open, stable and prosperous societies thrive. Societies with the full participation of women and marginalised groups and equal rights for all. Resilient, responsive, and representative.

And yet, we have seen authoritarian influence on the rise in states across the OSCE region leading to democratic backsliding, restrictions to civic space and the rollback of rights.

Where human rights abuses go unchecked, we see the seeds of conflict sown, often with devastating consequences for communities and nations. The absence of democratic freedoms and equality, good governance and the rule of law also impedes nations' prosperity, deters international investment, restricts innovation, and reduces opportunities.

The work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is vital to strengthening democracy and fostering long-term security. We fully support ODIHR's election observation methodology – its impartial and objective approach to elections has helped improve electoral processes across the OSCE region.

It is crucial that ODIHR has a proper budget to continue delivering on its mandate and ensure democratic progress is sustained.

We also recognise that the information people need to participate democratically is increasingly moving online. Collectively, we need to ensure that journalists are able to operate safely and to hold the powerful to account. We must also remain vigilant of disinformation by malign actors.

Madam Moderator – Russia's invasion of Ukraine shows that it is critical that we work even harder to strengthen democratic resilience. Internal repression in Russia and Belarus is tied to external aggression. We stand totally and firmly with Ukraine.

Madam Chair – in conclusion, societies that govern themselves democratically, where all groups meaningfully participate in political and economic processes, are safer, stronger and more secure. We call on all OSCE participating states to recognise the importance of democracy in underpinning collective security, to work together to combat democratic backsliding in the OSCE region and to fully support the vital work of ODIHR.

Thank you very much.