

# UK statement in response to the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan

We welcome and thank Ambassador John MacGregor and his colleagues for his report to the Permanent Council and the good work they have clearly done in Uzbekistan over the last year.

The excellent relationship his Office has built with the host government is warmly welcomed by the UK. This relationship allows the OSCE to strengthen co-operation between Uzbekistan and the full range of OSCE institutions and executive structures. We commend bringing the collective and tailored strengths of different parts of the OSCE to the country. This includes the Special Representative for trafficking; ODIHR; the High Commissioner on National Minorities; and the Representative on Freedom of the Media.

The UK government continues to support the Uzbek government's reforms – including in the areas of law, commerce, foreign exchange, national security, and anti-corruption. We are also pleased to witness Uzbekistan's continued cooperation with its neighbours, mirrored by the work of the Office.

I want to focus attention today – and highlight – three specific areas of commendable work of the Project Coordinator.

First on transnational threats. And in particular assistance in developing the draft National Strategy on Countering Terrorism in Uzbekistan and its related Action Plan for 2021 to 2025. We welcome the training of law enforcement officers on counter-terrorism policing and improving their skills on countering illicit drug circulation. The UK also looks forward to continuing collaboration with the Uzbek Government on regional security and the prevention and detection of serious organised crime.

Second, the work on the third dimension. This includes supporting adoption of a National Human Rights Strategy. This is occurring via a national consultation conference and by raising awareness of the tangible benefits of a National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) against torture. We welcome the Uzbek Government's efforts to improve engagement with the UN, OSCE and international NGOs and in addressing longstanding human rights concerns. At the heart of the OSCE is the principle of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, which we support all efforts to advance.

And third – training to enhance women's empowerment and advance female participation following the December 2019 elections, as well as promoting the importance of women in policing. Promotion of gender inclusivity is a key UK priority. We welcome the progress made on gender issues, and encourage implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

In addition – we welcome the Office's Project Agreement Process. We are glad to see that this has been both useful and successful over the years in

guiding the work of the field mission. It is of the utmost importance that OSCE-funded projects are effective and relevant and as such we welcome this useful tool. We also commend the renewed effort at sharing project ideas, successes and best practice in programme activity.

As this is likely to be the last Permanent Council meeting for Ambassador MacGregor in his role as Head of Mission in Tashkent I would like to greatly thank him for his hard work, his unbounded energy and his efforts in Uzbekistan and in ensuring the OSCE has a strong presence there. I wish the Office continued success and wish him all the very best in whatever comes next.