

UK Statement on Democratic Institutions – Working Session 3

Mr Moderator

I fully align with the statement given by Poland on behalf of the EU, but would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

15 September marked International Day of Democracy – the theme this year was “participation”, recalling that at the heart of democracy are people. This reflects our OSCE commitments, notably from Copenhagen in 1990. In this we agreed that: “The will of the people, freely and fairly expressed through periodic and genuine elections, is the basis of the authority and legitimacy of all government.”

Given the challenging global environment, it is very important to mark the International Day of Democracy. And to continue to support and encourage strong, functional democracies globally.

This is particularly true in the OSCE context as democracy, human rights and the rule of law contribute to long-term security and prosperity.

Advocating respect for these values is in all our national interests. There is a strong correlation between societies that are secure and prosperous, and those that enjoy open and participative democracy.

The UK supports democracy around the world - including the OSCE region - by standing up for those individuals who strive to defend these principles, locally and nationally, when they are under threat. Without the vigilance and bravery of human rights defenders, democracy can be undermined and weakened.

Human rights defenders play a crucial role in the democratic process, often putting themselves and their families at great personal risk to stand up for the rights of minorities and others.

To make clear our commitment, in July, we published the “UK Support for Human Rights Defenders” document, which sets out the type of support the UK Government can offer.

The strength of any democracy can be measured by its ability to cope with strong differences of opinion, and its respect for the right of all persons to exercise their fundamental freedoms that underpin democratic societies.