



## United States Mission to the OSCE

# **Response to the ODIHR Election Assessment Mission Final Report on Parliamentary Elections in Tajikistan**

As delivered by Ambassador James Gilmore  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
June 4, 2020

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

The United States expresses its gratitude to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and its Elections Assistance Mission, led by Ambassador Eberhard Pohl, for their analysis of Tajikistan's March 1 parliamentary elections. We agree with the Elections Assessment Mission's conclusions.

We note that all OSCE participating States have made commitments regarding the conduct of elections. Among these commitments, OSCE participating States recognize that:

- Elections are the foundation of representative government;
- The right to participate in elections that are free and fair is a human right guaranteed by international law; and,
- That to be democratic, an election process must be free, fair, transparent, and accountable.

ODIHR is an independent group of people, an independent institution to assess these elections. They have no stake in suggesting anything except for what their true observations are. They are independent, and a fair representation of the Organization of which we all are members.

As participating States we hold each other to these commitments, and we work together to foster the development of democratic institutions necessary for implementing effective elections.

The Elections Assessment Mission noted that a number of institutional deficits prevented the deployment of a full Elections Observation Mission or the implementation of comprehensive support to assist the government of Tajikistan in strengthening its electoral institutions ahead of the March 1 parliamentary elections. Yet, these issues of concern are not new.

Following an ODIHR election observation mission in 2015, ODIHR identified several shortcomings in Tajikistan's electoral framework and offered recommendations to promote "integrity and credibility" in Tajikistan's electoral system and to bring it in line with international standards. ODIHR's new report makes clear that these shortcomings remained unaddressed and had a detrimental effect on the 2020 electoral process. This lack of progress was a lost opportunity that weakened the public's trust in the credibility of their national elections.

We note that Tajikistan will hold presidential elections later on this year. In preparation for these elections, we impress upon Tajikistan's government and ODIHR the need for joint coordination on an action plan to strengthen Tajikistan's electoral institutions. There is another election, and another chance to improve. We encourage the government of Tajikistan to work with international partners and take the necessary actions ahead of the presidential elections to allow for the deployment of a full elections observation mission. Robust and transparent international elections observation will give the people of Tajikistan greater trust in the integrity of presidential elections.

As partners, it is important that all participating States work together to honor our OSCE commitments on the conduct of elections. We are confident that ODIHR and Tajikistan's bilateral OSCE partners can provide guidance and recommendations to assist Tajikistan's authorities in strengthening their electoral institutions-- we are confident they want to do so-- encouraging greater political pluralism, and expanding the role for independent media and civil society in ensuring the integrity of elections. We urge the government of Tajikistan to implement ODIHR's recommendations for future elections and to take all necessary steps to fulfill its obligations enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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