



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No. 1232 Vienna, 13 June 2019

## EU Statement on the Presidential Elections in Kazakhstan

Presidential elections took place in the Republic of Kazakhstan on 9 June 2019 with Kassym-Jomart Tokayev voted into his first term as President.

We thank the OSCE/ODIHR - Election Observation Mission (EOM) led by Amb. Urszula Gacek for their valuable work and their report.

We welcome the Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions produced by the ODIHR and OSCE PA International Election Observation Mission, which is the result of their thorough preparation of the election observation and using their long-standing, impartial and professional expertise, in line with the internationally-recognised ODIHR election observation methodology.

We take note of the preliminary findings that the political environment before election day was not conducive to provide for genuine political pluralism, but rather that space for civil society and political opposition was limited, and that fundamental freedoms continue to be unduly restricted, which had negative effects on freedom of expression; the preliminary report also states that access to media was uneven during the election campaign.

While elections were administered efficiently by the Central Electoral Commission, we also took note of findings of irregularities on election day, including cases of stuffing of ballot boxes, group voting and series of identical

signatures on voter lists. According to the report, the count was also negatively assessed in more than half of observations.

In particular, there were widespread detentions of peaceful protesters on election day, with the preliminary findings noting that a number of peaceful protests organized in Nur-Sultan, Almaty, Semey, and Shymkent resulted in forceful response by police to disperse or arrest protesters. Observers reported that several hundred protesters were detained in Nur-Sultan and Almaty, including journalists and human rights defenders.

We agree with the International Election Observation Mission that these elections provided a chance for political reforms and democratic changes with a candidates field that, for the first time, did not include the long-serving president, and which also included a woman candidate. The political will expressed by all voters should be taken into due account by the new President and the government.

We call on the new Government to address the shortcomings identified by the Election Observation Mission and to make use of the expertise that the ODIHR, the field mission and other OSCE institutions can provide in this regard.

In the framework of our Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Kazakhstan, the European Union stands ready to further support reforms to strengthen the promotion and protection of fundamental freedoms and human rights, the respect for democratic principles, the rule of law and good governance.

We look forward to working with the new President in this regard, as well as to advance EU-Kazakhstan relations more broadly.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, as well as CANADA align themselves with this statement.

\* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.