

INTERIM REPORT
25 November – 10 December 2019

13 December 2019

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- On 20 September 2019, the Central Election Commission (CEC) scheduled the elections to the lower (legislative) chamber of Uzbekistan’s parliament, the *Oliy Majlis* for 22 December. These elections – the first since Shavkat Mirziyoyev was elected president in 2016 – are being held under the slogan “New Uzbekistan – New Elections” and are presented as a milestone in the implementation of the country’s ambitious Development Strategy.
- The elections will be held under a significantly revised legal framework. The newly adopted Election Code incorporates certain previous ODIHR recommendations, notably the removal of reserved seats in the legislative chamber, provisions to equalize the voting population size of election districts and allowing citizens to sign in support of more than one prospective electoral contestant. Legal amendments to address long-standing ODIHR recommendations related to provisions on the right to stand for election and the exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms of assembly, association and expression have been few.
- The elections are organized by the Central Election Commission (CEC), 150 District Election Commissions (DECs) and some 10,300 Precinct Election Commissions (PECs). The CEC has adopted a number of resolutions and other normative acts to regulate the preparation and conduct of elections. To date, electoral operations have been conducted in a timely manner. In addition to the parliamentary elections, regional and local elections will also take place on 22 December. Early voting will take place between 12 and 19 December.
- The increase in the number of constituencies from 135 to 150 required a comprehensive redrawing of the electoral boundaries. At the time of delineation, the new constituencies had an approximately equal number of registered voters.
- The CEC has announced that the details of some 20.5 million citizens have been included in the newly compiled and centralised register of voters, the Single Electronic Voter List (SEVL). All polling stations will have access to the SEVL through the Electoral Process Management Information System that was introduced on 22 November. For the first time citizens in pre-trial detention and those sentenced to a term of imprisonment not exceeding five years are eligible to vote.
- Following the verification of a sample of at least 40,000 supporting signatures that parties were required to gather to nominate candidates, five political parties were certified to contest the elections. On 15 November, the CEC registered all 750 nominated candidates, five in each of the 150 constituencies, including 310 women. Of these, 43 are sitting MPs, 6 of whom are women.
- All expenditures related to the preparation and conduct of parties’ and candidates’ election campaigns must be financed from the state budget. The DECs, in co-operation with the local administration, determine the locations for free of charge placement of outdoor campaign material. Parties are also holding campaign events in venues designated by the local government authorities free of charge.

- The Constitution establishes the right to access information and the freedom of thought and speech, but holds media liable for the “trustworthiness” of disseminated information. There are a large number of television and radio stations. The Election Code affords contestants the right to access broadcast and print media on an equal basis and a CEC resolution details the actual allocation of airtime and print space to contestants. Frequent debates are taking place but journalists in traditional media have generally not sought to scrutinise party programmes. Increasingly, bloggers are seen as the most important source of independent commentary.
- The Election Code provides for observation of elections by party agents, international observers, and for the first time, by members of *Mahalla* committees, traditional Uzbek community structures, which also had an important role in the electoral process, including in the process of constituency boundary delimitation, the selection of commission members and the compilation of the voter lists. The status of citizen observer is restricted to members of *Mahalla* committees, thereby excluding any other civil society organizations.

II. INTRODUCTION

Following an invitation from the Central Election Commission (CEC), and based on the recommendation of a Needs Assessment Mission conducted from 9 to 11 July 2019, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) established an Election Observation Mission (EOM) on 25 November. The ODIHR EOM will observe the first round of the parliamentary elections that will be held on 22 December.¹ The ODIHR EOM, headed by Tana de Zulueta, consists of 11 experts based in Tashkent and 30 long-term observers deployed on 3 December across Uzbekistan. Observers are drawn from 17 OSCE participating States. The ODIHR EOM has requested the CEC to accredit a further 224 short-term observers (STOs) who will observe the voting, counting and tabulation of results. Elections to the local and regional councils will be held concurrently with the parliamentary elections. The ODIHR EOM will comment on those only to the extent that they impact the conduct of the parliamentary elections.

III. BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

On 20 September, the Central Election Commission (CEC) called the parliamentary elections to the lower (legislative) chamber of *Oliy Majlis* for 22 December 2019.² The elections, the first since Shavkat Mirziyoyev was elected president in 2016, are held under the slogan “New Uzbekistan – New Elections” and are presented as a milestone in the country’s ambitious Development Strategy, which aims to modernize the country among other things through strengthening the role of parliament and political parties in democratic reform, reforming governance and public management, including media and civil society, ensuring the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, and guaranteeing the protection of citizens’ rights and freedoms. Many ODIHR EOM interlocutors refer to the Strategy when discussing the conduct of and their participation in the elections.

The last parliamentary elections, which were contested by the four registered parties, took place on 21 December 2014. Of the 135 contested seats, the Liberal Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (LDPU) obtained 52 seats, the Democratic Party of Uzbekistan *Milliy Tiklanish* (DPU) 36 seats, the People’s Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (PDPU) 27 seats, and the Social Democratic Party of Uzbekistan *Adolat*

¹ Second round contests may be required to determine the election winners. These elections, if necessary, will be held within two weeks of the 22 December poll.

² The Parliament (*Oliy Majlis*) comprises two chambers, both with a five-year term – an indirectly-elected Senate (upper chamber) composed of 100 senators, and the Legislative Chamber (lower chamber) composed of 150 deputies.

(SDPU) 20 seats.³ At the time, the law reserved 15 seats for the Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan (EMU).⁴ Only 16 per cent of the sitting members in the Legislative Chamber are women.

The *Oliy Majlis* exercises legislative power and is the supreme state representative body. Uzbekistan has a presidential system in which the executive branch exercises wide authority relative to the parliament.⁵ In March 2019, the Constitution was amended with a view to democratize the formation of the Government.⁶ The current Legislative Chamber has only 108 sitting members as 42 have been appointed to various executive posts. No by-elections have taken place.

IV. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The legal framework for parliamentary elections includes the 1992 Constitution (last amended in September 2019), a new Election Code (in force from June 2019), as well as resolutions and other normative acts adopted by the CEC on the preparation and conduct of elections.⁷ Provisions contained in the Law on Political Parties, the Law on Financing of Political Parties, and the Criminal Code and the Code of Administrative Responsibility are also applicable.

The new Election Code unifies and replaces five previous laws and revises many of the election rules and procedures significantly.⁸ The Election Code incorporated certain previous ODIHR recommendations, including: the removal of provisions for reserved seats for the EMU in the *Oliy Majlis*, as well as the undue restriction on voting rights based on on-going criminal proceedings and the blanket restriction on convicts voting, setting a maximum deviation in the size of the voting population in electoral districts at 10 per cent from the average and allowing voters to sign in support of more than one party that wishes to contest the election. Nevertheless, other long-standing ODIHR recommendations remain unaddressed in the legal framework, including provisions that prevent citizens from standing for election without being nominated by a political party, a residency requirement for candidates and the length of residency required and the denial of the suffrage rights of persons deemed by a court to be “legally incapable”.

While the Constitution guarantees the right to peaceful assembly, subordinate normative acts place significant limitations on the opportunity to exercise this right. Recently, some of the administrative requirements on the functioning of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were eased, resulting in a more enabling environment for civic associations.⁹ The ODIHR EOM is not however aware of any registered civil society organisations that focus on civil and political rights, including electoral rights. Freedom of opinion and expression, although protected in the Constitution, is constrained by several

³ According to official data, the turnout was 89 per cent.

⁴ On 22 January 2019, the Ecological Party of Uzbekistan (EPU) was registered by the Ministry of Justice. While EMU remains in place, its chairperson and party executives of EMU became that of the EPU. The EPU will, for the first time, compete on an equal footing with the four other political parties.

⁵ The President issues binding decrees, resolutions and ordinances, appoints the Prosecutor General and Chairman of the National Security Service, and plays a key role in the nomination and appointment of other high-ranking officials and judges.

⁶ The changes strengthened the role of the Legislative Chamber in the formation of the government such that prospective Minister must first be approved by the Legislative Chamber, and only thereafter be confirmed by the President.

⁷ In September 2019, Article 117 of the Constitution was amended such that persons imprisoned by court judgment for serious and very serious crimes, cannot take part in elections.

⁸ The laws on presidential; parliamentary; and local elections; the activity of the CEC and, on suffrage rights.

⁹ Changes relate to registration of NGO grant contracts, payments of state duties, annual reporting requirements and the requirement to notify the Ministry of Justice about planned activities. The Ministry of Justice informed the ODIHR EOM that in 2018, there were 921 applications for NGO registration, out of which 811 were approved. Up to 1 December, in 2019, 605 requests for registration were received of which 462 were approved.

provisions on criminal and administrative offences which remain on the statute despite previous recommendations made by ODIHR and other international organizations.¹⁰

The legislation on the registration of political parties – which ODIHR had assessed as burdensome and open to arbitrary application – remains largely unchanged. The only registered parties are those represented in parliament. With the exception of the Ecological Party of Uzbekistan (EPU), no new party has been registered since 2003.¹¹ According to the Ministry of Justice, no applications have been received either.

V. ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The 150 members of the Legislative Chamber are each elected from single-mandate majoritarian districts (constituencies). The candidate who secures more than half of the votes cast is elected. If no candidate receives a majority of the vote, a run-off election is held between the two leading candidates within two weeks. Elections will not be valid if less than 33 per cent of the total number of voters participate. In this scenario, a repeat election is held, for which there is no turnout requirement, and the candidate who receives the most votes is elected. Citizens should vote for the candidate of their choice from among the registered candidates in the constituency of their permanent or temporary residence.

The increase in the number of constituencies from 135 to 150 required a comprehensive redrawing of the electoral boundaries.¹² All constituencies are wholly within the borders of Uzbekistan's 12 regions, the Republic of Karakalpakstan and the city of Tashkent.¹³ Each constituency has an approximately equal number of registered voters, as required by international standards and good practice on equal suffrage.¹⁴

While there is no out of country constituency, a total of 55 polling stations abroad across 38 countries have been associated to the 12 constituencies of Tashkent city. The CEC informed the ODIHR EOM that some 1.8 million voters are registered abroad. Depending on the turnout their participation could cause these constituencies to pass the maximum permissible deviation of 10 per cent.

VI. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The elections are administered by the Central Election Commission (CEC), 150 District Election Commissions (DECs) and some 10,300 Precinct Election Commissions (PECs). State-level and local institutions are required by law to provide logistical and operational support to election commissions. *Mahalla* committees assisted commissions at the local level in the process of constituency boundary delimitation, the selection of commission members and the compilation of the voter lists.¹⁵

The CEC is a permanent constitutional body, while the DECs and PECs are set up for each election. CEC members are appointed for indefinite terms by the *Oliy Majlis* at the proposal of the regional-level elected representative bodies. Almost half, 11 of the CEC's 21 members, were appointed in 2019, including the Deputy Chairperson and Secretary. The CEC's composition rose from 16 to 21 members, increasing the

¹⁰ See also the [UN Human Rights Committee concluding observations](#) on the fourth periodic report of Uzbekistan.

¹¹ With the exception of the DPU – *Milliy Tiklanish*, which was established through a merger of *Milliy Tiklanish* and the National Democratic Party *Fidokorlar*, in 2008.

¹² The redistricting was formalised by CEC resolution 954 of 7 October 2019.

¹³ The number of constituencies per region varies from 4 in Syrdarya to 17 in Ferghana.

¹⁴ Article 9 of the Election Code allows for a maximum permissible deviation of 10 per cent in the number of electors between electoral constituencies.

¹⁵ *Mahallas* are traditional Uzbek community structures which regulate the everyday life of a settlement and serve to link the state and the community. Their role was formalized in the 1993 Law on the Institutions of Self-Government of the Citizens. Violations of *Mahalla* committee decisions are legally punishable.

number of women from three to seven. Seven CEC members are appointed on a full-time, permanent basis. The remaining commission members perform their duties in addition to their regular work.

The CEC website contains a wide range of information which is regularly updated. Since the announcement of the elections, the CEC has published over 60 binding resolutions, among other things relating to the certification of political parties, the registration of candidates, the formation of polling stations abroad, the format of the ballot papers, and election day procedures.¹⁶ To date, electoral deadlines have generally been respected and electoral operations have been conducted in a timely manner.

At constituency level, the election process is administered by 150 DEC members composed of nine to eleven members. DEC members were appointed by the CEC on 11 October.¹⁷ PECs have between five and nineteen members and were formed by 12 November by the DEC members. The membership of the PEC is determined by the DEC members, based on proposals made by “*Mahallas*, public associations, enterprises, institutions and organizations”. Incompatibilities with the membership of an election commission include membership of a political party, being a mayor, running as a candidate or registering as a candidate proxy. According to the CEC, on 26 November there are 1,612 DEC members and 111,033 PEC members.

The legislation requires that the work of election commissions is guided by the key principles of independence, lawfulness, collegiality, transparency and fairness. Sessions are public and can be attended by candidates, their proxies, authorised party representatives, accredited media, members of *Mahallas* and accredited international observers. Decisions should be taken by an open, majority vote.

The CEC has informed the ODIHR EOM that it is seeking to improve awareness of polling procedures, including by modifying its training methodology for lower lower-level commissions and making the training material more user-friendly. The training of PEC members is still ongoing and sessions are being observed and assessed by the ODIHR EOM observers. The CEC also launched a mobile application dedicated to the 2019 elections, organized information sessions, roundtables, and distributed printed materials and videos.

From 12 to 19 December, voters who will not be able to vote on election day are, by law, entitled to cast their ballots early by voting in person at PECs, including abroad. Mobile voting will also be organized, including in some 110 locations abroad.

According to the Election Code, all polling stations are to be made accessible for wheelchairs. Voters with disabilities may request assistance for voting, and braille sleeves are to be provided in each polling station.

VII. VOTER REGISTRATION

With the exception of citizens who have been declared “legally incapable” by a court, including on the basis of intellectual or psychosocial disability, all citizens aged at least 18 years, have the right to vote. For the first time, citizens who are in pre-trial detention and those sentenced to a term of imprisonment not exceeding five years are eligible to vote.

Voter registration is passive and based on the permanent or temporary residence of the voter. The elections will utilise a new countrywide register of voters – the Single Electronic Voter List (SEVL). The process of compiling the SEVL began in 2017 and drew on a country-wide cadastral mapping programme

¹⁶ Certification designates political party as eligible to nominate candidates.

¹⁷ The right to propose DEC members, as for the CEC, rests with the the regional-level elected representative bodies.

and the databases of state bodies including from the State Personalization Centre, which manages identity cards. The CEC reported a preliminary number of 20.5 million voters.

The extracts of the SEVL are created for each polling station and these ‘preliminary’ voter lists (VLs) were provided to each PEC for verification. The exercise – which is primarily conducted through door-to-door visits, with support from local executive bodies – is still ongoing. The updating of the SEVL by the PECs is made through the “Electoral Process Management Information System” (EPMIS), which was introduced on 22 November 2019.

By law, revised lists are to be made available for public scrutiny at least 15 days before election day. Voters may also verify their data online, and have the right to file complaints to the corresponding PEC against incorrect inclusion or exclusion and inaccuracies. A PEC decision on a complaint regarding the registration of a voter may be appealed to the courts. Voter lists for citizens in military bases, hospitals, pre-trial detention centres, penitentiaries, health resorts, and diplomatic missions are compiled from data provided by heads of the institutions. Changes to the voter lists are not permitted within three days of the election. Citizens who on election day find that they are not included in a voter list, can request to be registered by the PEC at the polling station on election day based on proof of identification and residency.

VIII. CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

Citizen aged 25 or older on election day who have resided permanently in the country for at least five years before election day, are eligible to stand as candidates, except those disenfranchised by a court decision on “legal incapacitation” grounds or as part of a criminal conviction.¹⁸ Active military or security personnel or professional clergy of religious organizations are not eligible. Self-nominated independent candidates are not permitted. Candidates are not required to be registered in the constituency where they are running.

A political party may nominate only one candidate per constituency provided that the party is registered with the Ministry of Justice at least four months prior to the announcement of the election campaign and has collected at least 40,000 signatures of voters across the administrative territorial units.¹⁹ Following a change in the legal provisions, and in line with a previous ODIHR EOM recommendation, voters can now sign in support of more than one party.

Following a verification of a 15 per cent sample of the submitted supporting signatures, on 15 October, the CEC certified all five political parties as eligible to nominate candidates. On 15 November, the CEC registered all 750 nominated candidates, 5 in each of the 150 constituencies. Since then 3 candidates have withdrawn, bringing the total of candidates to 747. Of these, 43 are sitting MPs, 6 of whom are women. In meetings with the ODIHR EOM, the interlocutors from political parties expressed their satisfaction with the existing legal provisions on fielding candidates.

The Election Code requires that women should constitute at least 30 per cent of the total number of candidates nominated by a political party, and all parties complied with this requirement. Overall, 41 per cent of the candidates (310) are women.²⁰

Parties may withdraw the nomination of a candidate up to 15 days prior to election day, 5 days prior to the start of early voting. Candidates may withdraw their candidacy at any time before the 22 December

¹⁸ According to Article 5 of the Election Code persons declared “legally incapable” and held in a place of detention by a court order may not be elected whereas according to Article 71, individuals cannot register as candidates if convicted of a “serious or particularly serious crimes”.

¹⁹ Political parties are not permitted to collect more than eight per cent of the required number of signatures in one administrative unit.

²⁰ The actual number of women nominated by parties ranged from 36 percent (the EPU) to 48 percent (DPU).

election day, including after early voting has started. The Election Code makes no provision on how votes cast for a withdrawn candidate will be dealt with. The ODIHR EOM was informed that in the event of the withdrawal of a candidate, the CEC would reprint the ballots and provide them to the relevant electoral district.

IX. CAMPAIGN FINANCE

All expenditures related to the preparation and conduct of election campaigns must be financed from the state budget. Private funding of specific parties' or candidates' election campaigns is not allowed. The financing of parties – and other material support to candidates or political parties – by foreign states, foreign nationals or legal entities is expressly prohibited.

A size of a party's financial entitlement is determined by the number of its candidates that were registered to contest the elections. For the 2019 parliamentary elections, the CEC allocated approximately UZS 8.1 billion (equivalent to approximately EUR 778,800) for all parties combined to fund their candidates, which amounts to UZS 10.8 million (approximately EUR 1,040) per candidate and UZS 1.625 billion (EUR 156,000) per party.²¹ According to CEC resolution, parties should transfer 30 per cent of the fund to their candidates, meaning that each candidate will receive about UZS 3.25 million (EUR 315) per candidate, while the remaining 70 per cent is retained by the party for other expenses related to their participation in elections. The offering of payments and gifts to voters during campaign events is explicitly forbidden.

There are no legal requirements on pre-election campaign finance reporting. Within one month of the publication of the election results, political parties must publish information on their campaign spending on their official websites as well as in the press. Parties' annual budgets are published and presented to the lower chamber of the *Oliy Majlis*, along with conclusions by the CEC, the Chamber of Accounts and the Ministry of Justice on party financial incomes and expenses during parliamentary election campaigns. The Chamber of Accounts and the *Oliy Majlis* are empowered to conduct audits of parties' finances.

X. ELECTION CAMPAIGN

The campaign period officially commenced on 20 September and will last until 20 December. The candidates started campaigning on 18 November upon completion of candidate registration by the CEC. Political parties and candidates are entitled to notify the place and time of meeting with voters to DEC or PECs, which shall inform the voters in advance. On 5 October 2019, the CEC approved a resolution that provides a single blanket permit to campaign events, including rallies, for the duration of the campaign. Local government authorities are obliged to provide, free of charge, designated venues for holding campaign events. There is a campaign silence period on election day and the day preceding it which also prohibits the publication of opinion polls, including online.

The CEC decided to allocate 225 billboards to display campaign material at no cost to each political party across the country. The number of billboards varies region by region.²² The DEC, in co-operation with the local administration, determine the actual billboard locations. In addition, 74 electronic screens across the country were allocated to contestants to broadcast their messages. Parties and candidates can use the state funds to place additional material with private service providers, should the funding of parties and candidates be sufficient to afford this. Very few campaign posters are visible.

²¹ EUR 1 equals approximately UZS 10,400.

²² According to CEC resolution 977 regions and territorial units have the following allocation of spaces: 17 in Andijan, 14 in Bukhara, 20 in Ferghana, 14 in Jizzakh, 18 in Karakalpakstan, 16 in Kashkadarya, 13 in Kharezm, 13 in Namangan, 12 in Navoyi, 16 in Samarkand, 12 in Sirdarya, 15 in Surkhandarya, 23 in Tashkent region, and 22 in Tashkent City.

The parties' programmes focus on social policies, service delivery and the economy. Beside general election messages that target distinct socio-economic groups, contestants informed the ODIHR EOM that in order to appeal to local constituencies they designed their campaign strategies in close co-operation with regional party offices and *Mahallas*.

The chairmen of the five registered parties that the ODIHR EOM met with all emphasized their view that rather than being restrictive, the campaign rules create an enabling environment for campaigning, and none indicated that they would campaign differently if permitted to do so. Contestants referred to holding of public and indoor meetings, door-to-door canvassing, and displaying and distribution of campaign material as the most widespread reach-out methods. So far, very little evidence of outdoor campaign activities has been observed.

XI. MEDIA

The Constitution provides for the right to access information, the freedom of thought and speech and prohibits censorship, but holds media liable for the "trustworthiness" of disseminated information. The Mass Media Law and Law on Informatization are the main legal Acts regulating the media and contain a wide range of provisions on organization, functioning and financial arrangements for media outlets. These Acts limit media freedoms by holding intermediaries liable for third-party content hosted on their platforms.²³ Slander, libel, "insulting the dignity of the citizens", dissemination of "false information" during election and "interference in internal affairs" by journalists are criminal offences punishable by up to five years in prison.

A large number of media outlets are in operation, including several television stations with national coverage. Television remains the most important source of information followed by news websites and radio stations. Independent bloggers are active and are seen as the most important source of independent commentary. The Agency for Information and Mass Communications (AIMC) is responsible for registering all privately-owned media outlets, including online media.²⁴ The AIMC is tasked with overseeing the mass media's compliance with the legal framework, which includes the monitoring of content. The Agency is overseen by the President.

Three articles of the Election Code and CEC resolutions regulate the media's coverage of the contestants' election campaigns during the official campaign period.²⁵ The Election Code requires mass media to provide equal conditions free of charge.

For the first time, debates are organized between representatives of the five parties by the International Press Centre (IPC), in accordance to the CEC resolution, which provides for three debates per week. Most of these debates are broadcast live and those that are not are only edited for quality control purposes. In addition to the IPC, the *National Association of Electronic Mass Media* (NAESMI) is organizing debates.

So far, the International Press Centre has organized 25 debates, almost all live, while the NAESMI has organized one live and ten pre-recorded debates. Generally traditional media provide little analysis or

²³ The Law on *Informatization* provides a definition of a 'blogger' and obliges owners of websites and bloggers to verify the truthfulness of published information. Access to the websites could be blocked by the Agency of Information and Mass Communications for non-compliance with these requirements.

²⁴ The AIMC was formerly the Press and Information Agency of Uzbekistan.

²⁵ Every contesting party is entitled to receive 30 minutes free airtime weekly in each of the 4 state-owned television stations. From 18 November to 15 December every contesting party is entitled to receive one page (the second page of the publication) for placing materials and space on the first page to make announcements. From 17 to 19 December parties are allocated a half page of space for materials on one occasion, plus space for announcements.

discussion of political issues raised during the debates and journalists have not sought to scrutinise party programmes. Outside the debates, there is little coverage of the campaign in the media.

The social networks, particularly Facebook and Telegram, are used by parties to diversify their campaign methods and are among the most visible forms of election campaigning, but the general level of campaigning through the internet remains at a low level.²⁶ It is noteworthy that, to date, political parties are not placing paid advertisements or sponsored content in the main social networks.

On 1 December, the ODIHR EOM commenced qualitative and quantitative media monitoring of selected state and private media outlets.²⁷

XII. NATIONAL MINORITIES

Uzbekistan is a multi-ethnic country. According to official statistics, ethnic Uzbeks constitute 83.8 per cent of the population while other the other sizable ethnic communities are Tajiks, Kazakhs, Russians, and Karakalpaks.²⁸ The Constitution provides for equal rights and freedoms without discrimination based on ethnicity.

All four of the parties who contested the 2014 parliamentary elections have members of parliament from minority populations. According to the CEC, out of 750 nominated candidates for the upcoming elections, 91.6 per cent are Uzbek, 3.3 per cent are Karakalpaks, 2.7 per cent are Koreans, 1.7 per cent are Tajiks, 0.9 per cent are Russians, and 0.8 per cent are Kazakhs.

The Election Code provides for ballot papers to be printed in Uzbek (in Latin and Cyrillic alphabets) as well as in the languages spoken by the majority of the population of the respective district upon DEC's decision. Ballots in some constituencies will be printed in Russian and Karakalpak. Although the Russian language does not have an official status, some electoral material, including related legislation and CEC regulations, are published in both Uzbek and Russian. Political parties informed ODIHR EOM that they have published campaign materials including party newspapers in Uzbek, Russian and Karakalpak, and in minority languages such as Tajik and Kazakh.

XIII. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Alleged violations of the electoral law may be reported by individuals and legal entities to elections commissions, which are obliged to examine the complaint and respond within three days or, if the complaint was received less than six days before the elections or on the day of voting, immediately. All complaints must be recorded in a special register, and election commissions must inform complainants of the adopted decision.

Decisions of DEC and PEC may be appealed by political parties, candidates, proxies, observers and voters either to higher election commissions or to a court within 10 days. The timeframe for hearing and ruling on such appeals is the same as for complaints adjudicated by the election administration. CEC decisions can only be appealed to the Supreme Court, which must likewise examine them in the same time frame, with the complainant having the right to participate in the hearing. To date, no complaints have been filed with the CEC.

²⁶ The contestants' activities on social media refer mostly to informing voters about campaign events and reposting news headlines from printed media.

²⁷ The EOM is analysing the content of three TV channels (*O'zbekiston*, *O'zbekiston 24* and *UzReport*), two radio stations (*O'zbekiston* and *Yoshlar*) and three print media outlets (*Xalq So'zi*, *Narodnoe Slovo* and *Pravda Vostoka*).

²⁸ The last official census was conducted in 1989. It lists more than 100 ethnic groups residing in Uzbekistan.

XIV. CITIZEN AND INTERNATIONAL OBSERVATION

The Election Law provides for observation of elections by party agents, international observers from other countries and invited international organizations, and for the first time, by members of *Mahalla* committees. The status of citizen observer is restricted to members of *Mahalla* committees, thereby excluding any other civil society organizations. Observer accreditations could be requested by the eligible entities up until 15 days before the election. Accredited media may also follow the process. Accreditation as an observer affords the right to follow all stages of the electoral process.

XV. ODIHR EOM ACTIVITIES

The ODIHR EOM commenced its work in Uzbekistan on 24 November. The Mission has met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the CEC, the Supreme Court, members of parliament, candidates and representatives of political parties, media, bloggers, international organisations and some resident diplomatic missions. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) intends to deploy a delegation for election day observation. The OSCE Chairperson-in-Office has appointed George Tsereteli, the OSCE PA President, as Special Co-ordinator and leader of the short-term OSCE observer mission for these elections. The ODIHR EOM and the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan operate separately, under their respective mandates.

***The English version of this report is the only official document.
Unofficial translations are available in Uzbek and Russian.***