

UK statement on legislative reform enabling access of election observers to the UK electoral process

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STARTS

“The Government of the United Kingdom supports fully the EU statement delivered by Spain, and would like to underline that the OSCE’s work in the field of democracy and election observation is an essential part of its goal to bring comprehensive and co-operative security to its participating States. The United Kingdom is a strong supporter of ODIHR’s work in this field.

I would like to expand on mention made in Mr Mitchell’s introduction to reform of UK election law. Last year we were pleased to welcome a team of ODIHR election experts to report on our General Election. ODIHR experts found that the General Election had been held ‘in keeping with the long-standing tradition of democracy in the United Kingdom’. However, they also raised some areas of concern, including access of observers to the electoral process. We indicated in our response to ODIHR that the United Kingdom intended to amend its law to allow observers full access to all parts of the electoral process.

Mr Chairman,

I am delighted to announce today that this has happened. The Electoral Administration Act passed in July this year asks the Electoral Commission to establish an accreditation procedure for anyone interested in observing an election in the United Kingdom. The Electoral Commission is currently consulting on the scheme for observer accreditation and we expect this procedure to be established by 31 January 2007, in time for the elections scheduled in England, Scotland and Wales in 2007.

We have worked closely with ODIHR on the provisions of the Electoral Administration Act, which includes other improvements to United Kingdom practices, for example improving transparency in electoral registration processes. The changes I have announced today demonstrate UK commitment to OSCE principles and show what can be achieved through political will and co-operation with ODIHR’s experts. I thank them for their help.

Mr Chairman,

We look forward to accrediting all those interested in observing our elections, including ODIHR and colleagues from overseas, when the system has been established.”

ENDS