



Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

December 2019

ODIHR NEEDS ASSESSMENT MISSION REPORT

9 - 11 July 2019



Warsaw
28 August 2019

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**OSCE/ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission Report
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I. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with its mandate and in anticipation of an official invitation to observe the 2019 parliamentary elections in Uzbekistan, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) undertook a Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) from 9 to 11 July. The NAM included Alexander Shlyk, Head of the ODIHR Elections Department, and Ulvi Akhundlu, ODIHR Election Adviser. The ODIHR NAM was joined by Farimah Daftary, Programme Officer of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

The purpose of the mission was to assess the pre-election environment and preparations for the parliamentary elections. Based on this assessment, the NAM should recommend whether to deploy an ODIHR election-related activity for the forthcoming elections and, if so, what type of activity best meets the identified needs. Meetings were held with officials from state institutions and the election administration, as well as with representatives of political parties, media, civil society, and the international community. A list of meetings is annexed to this report.

ODIHR would like to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Central Election Commission for their assistance and co-operation in organizing the NAM. ODIHR would also like to thank all of its interlocutors for taking the time to meet with the NAM and for sharing their views.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Uzbekistan is a republic with a strong presidential system in which the executive branch exercises wide authority relative to the parliament (*Oliy Majlis*). The parliament comprises two chambers – an indirectly elected 100-member Senate and a lower chamber with 150 members. The members of the lower chamber are elected from single-mandate majoritarian districts. If no candidate receives a majority of the votes cast, a second round between the two leading candidates will be held.

The elections will be held under a substantially revised legal framework. The Election Code, adopted in February 2019, unifies five different laws. It addresses certain previous ODIHR recommendations, including the removal of provisions for reserved seats in the parliament previously filled through an indirect election, removal of undue restrictions on voting rights based on on-going criminal proceedings or a conviction, introduction of a maximum permissible deviation in the size of electoral districts, revision of candidate support signature requirements and allowing voters to sign in support of more than one prospective electoral contestant. However, the Election Code does not address a number of long-standing recommendations, many of which pertain to restrictions on or an absence of guarantees of fundamental freedoms.

The parliamentary elections will be administered by a three-tiered election administration, including the CEC, 150 District Election Commissions (DECs), and over 9,000 Precinct Election Commissions (PECs). The CEC is planning an extensive cascade training for all DEC and PEC members throughout the country and a comprehensive voter awareness campaign on various aspects

of the electoral process. Most ODIHR NAM interlocutors acknowledged that proxy voting on behalf of several voters was still practiced throughout the country, especially in rural areas, and welcomed the efforts to tackle this phenomenon. Special measures are planned to facilitate independent participation and further protection of electoral rights of voters with disabilities.

Voter registration is passive. For the first time, the voter lists will be compiled based on the Single Electronic Voter Register, which is extracted from the Information System on Electoral Process Management, based on a compilation of information from various government authorities. The ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed confidence that the SEVR will become fully operational for the upcoming elections, although some noted concerns that it may not be sufficiently accurate due to the shortage of time, the complexity of interaction of the various bodies involved in the process and the large volume of information to be processed.

Candidates can only be put forward by registered political parties. Independent candidacies are not provided for by the law, despite a previous ODIHR recommendation. Positively, the new Election Code permits a voter to sign in support of more than one political party seeking to contest an election, in line with international good practice and a previous ODIHR recommendation.

The election campaign commences upon completion of candidate registration and ends one day prior to the election. The law contains provisions focused on ensuring equal campaign opportunities for all contestants, including in terms of holding meetings and access to the media. Political parties informed the ODIHR NAM that they expect the campaign to be vibrant with candidates using a combination of campaign strategies, including the use of social media. All election related expenses are funded by the state. The amount of state funding allocated to a political party depends on its number of registered candidates.

The Constitution provides for freedom of expression, while the Election Code and relevant CEC regulations govern the media's conduct throughout the electoral period. The media are held accountable for the trustworthiness of the disseminated information and defamation remains criminalized. Online sources are increasingly used as a source of political information and strive to challenge the traditional approaches to covering domestic events. Access to multiple internet-based media had been recently restored after more than ten years of intermittent blocking. The legal framework requires equal allocation of time and space among the candidates within the media.

Legislation provides for international election observation but, despite previous ODIHR recommendations and at odds with of Paragraph 8 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document, does not contain provisions for citizen election observation. All five political parties planning to contest the elections consider deployment of a large number of their representatives both as party agents and candidate proxies on election day.

All interlocutors met with during the ODIHR NAM underscored the need for an ODIHR election observation activity for the parliamentary elections noting that an external assessment would be of added value. Representatives of official bodies emphasized that the electoral process would be transparent and that any recommendations for potential improvement of the process would be welcome. In considering an observation activity, the ODIHR NAM has taken into account the various findings outlined in this report. Specific aspects that could benefit from review include the implementation of a substantially revised legal framework, the work of election administration at all levels, including the on-going efforts of the authorities to prevent proxy voting and the conduct of election day procedures, the new system of voter registration, and the environment and conduct of the electoral campaign, including media coverage.

On this basis, and despite outstanding issues with regard to the respect of fundamental freedoms, the ODIHR NAM recommends the deployment of an election observation mission for the 2019 parliamentary elections. In addition to a core team of experts, ODIHR will request the secondment by OSCE participating States of 30 long-term observers to follow the election process countrywide, as well as 250 short-term observers to follow election day procedures. In line with ODIHR's standard methodology, the EOM would include a media monitoring element.

III. FINDINGS

A. BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

Uzbekistan is a republic with a strong presidential system in which the executive branch exercises wide authority relative to the parliament.¹ Since Shavkat Mirziyoyev was elected president of Uzbekistan in December 2016, the country is experiencing a new pace of ambitious reforms targeting the country's economy and the governance system. ODIHR NAM interlocutors underscored in particular the abolishment of currency controls, visa liberalization for foreigners, rapprochement with neighboring countries, the release of a number of political prisoners and the reforms of the law-enforcement bodies as some of the most tangible results of the reforms implemented in the country.

The upcoming parliamentary elections are viewed as an important political event which could represent an important stage in Uzbekistan's transition to democracy. Elections will be held under a substantially revised legal framework that, according to some ODIHR NAM interlocutors, may lead to a more competitive electoral climate.

The last parliamentary elections took place on 21 December 2014 and the seats were distributed among four political parties: Liberal Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (LDPU) obtained 52 seats, Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (DPU) *Milliy Tiklanish* – 36 seats, People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (PDPU) – 27 seats, Social Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (SDPU) *Adolat* – 20 seats. In accordance with the law, 15 seats were allocated to the Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan (EMU). Women constitute only 16 per cent of the total number of members of the *Oliy Majlis*'s lower chamber, and only 1 of 15 ministers in the current government is a woman.

ODIHR has observed seven elections in Uzbekistan since 1999, most recently in 2016, when it deployed the first full-scale election observation mission (EOM) to observe the early presidential election. The ODIHR EOM concluded that the 2016 election underscored the need of comprehensive reform to address longstanding systemic shortcomings.²

B. ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The parliament (*Oliy Majlis*) comprises two chambers – a 100-member Senate and a lower chamber with 150 members, both with five-year terms. The composition of the Senate is based on territorial representation, with 6 members indirectly elected from each of the 12 regions, city of Tashkent and the Republic of Karakalpakstan, and 16 senators appointed by the president. The members of the

¹ The president nominates the prime minister, the chairpersons of the Senate, the general prosecutor, the Board of the Central Bank and the CEC, approves the Cabinet of Ministers, and appoints and dismisses all judges and local executive authorities as well as the chairperson of the National Security Service.

² See previous [ODIHR election-related reports on Uzbekistan](#).

lower chamber are elected from single-mandate majoritarian districts. If no candidate receives a majority of the votes cast, a second round between the two leading candidates will be held in two weeks. There is no minimum voter turnout requirement for the elections to be valid. Elections to the local and regional councils will be held concurrently with the parliamentary ones.

The legal framework for parliamentary elections comprises the Constitution, adopted in 1993 and last amended in September 2014, and a new Election Code, adopted in 2019 following a previous ODIHR recommendation. The legal framework for elections also includes the Law on Political Parties, the Law on Financing of Political Parties, relevant provisions of the Criminal Code and the Code of Administrative Offences, and regulations of the Central Election Commission (CEC).³

The Election Code unifies five different laws, which regulated the conduct of presidential, parliamentary and local elections, outlined guarantees of citizens' suffrage rights and established the framework for activities of the CEC. As part of a follow-up process to ODIHR's electoral recommendations, the authorities requested an opinion of the ODIHR and the Council of Europe's European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), which together provided extensive comments and recommendations on the draft text.⁴

The Election Code addresses certain previous ODIHR and Venice Commission recommendations, including the removal of provisions for reserved seats in the lower chamber of the parliament previously filled through indirect election, removal of undue restrictions on voting rights based on on-going criminal proceedings or a conviction, introduction of a maximum permissible deviation in the size of electoral districts, revision of candidate support signature requirements and allowing voters to sign in support of more than one prospective electoral contestant.

However, the Election Code did not address a number of long-standing recommendations, many of which pertain to restrictions on or an absence of guarantees of fundamental freedoms.⁵ Limitations on the freedom of assembly include a one-month advance authorization requirement for holding public assemblies, as well as possible sanctions for violations, including fines and imprisonment of up to three years.⁶ Limitations on the freedom of expression include numerous provisions on criminal and administrative offences. Limitations on the freedom of association include burdensome requirements for registering political parties, wide discretionary powers for denial of registration and deregistration. Positively, some administrative requirements, previously considered as impediments to the work of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), have been eased.⁷ Many ODIHR NAM interlocutors noted that the actual practical implementation of the revised legal framework would benefit from external scrutiny.

³ Uzbekistan is a party to a number of major international and regional instruments, including the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 2003 Convention against Corruption. Uzbekistan has yet to ratify the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which it signed in 2009.

⁴ See the ODIHR and Venice Commission [Joint Opinion on the Draft Election Code](#).

⁵ See the UN Human Right Committee [Concluding Observations on the forth periodic report of Uzbekistan](#).

⁶ On 6 June 2019, the Government posted for public comments the draft Law on rallies, meetings and demonstrations. The brief comments provided by the Office of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association concluded that "the draft law requires a significant revision to bring it in line with international human rights standards related to the exercise of freedom of peaceful assembly" and that "it contains a number of restrictive provisions that can not only legitimize the existing restrictive practice, but also lead to even greater restrictions on freedom of assembly".

⁷ These are related to registration of grant contracts of NGOs, payments of state duties, annual reporting requirements, and the requirement to notify the Ministry of Justice about planned activities.

C. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The parliamentary elections will be administered by a three-tiered election administration, including the CEC, 150 District Election Commissions (DECs), and over 9,000 Precinct Election Commissions (PECs).

The CEC is a permanent body, while DECs and PECs are set up for each election. State and local institutions are obliged to provide logistical and operational support to election commissions. The CEC has 16 members and is appointed for an indefinite term by the parliament, based on regional council proposals. CEC members elect a chairperson from amongst themselves, based on the president's nomination. Seven members are permanent while the others work on a voluntary basis. They reside in their respective regions and meet in the capital when sessions are convened. Three CEC members are women. Despite a recommendation of ODIHR and the Venice Commission to enhance women's participation in election commissions, especially in senior decision-making roles, the Election Code does not contain any requirements of equality of representation of both genders in the election administration.

The CEC forms the DECs not less than seventy days prior to elections, based on nominees recommended and selected by the deputies of the city and regional *Kengashes* (councils). Each DEC will, in turn, form the PECs in the corresponding constituency not less than forty days prior to elections, based on the recommendations of the councils who receive nominations from NGOs and *mahallas*.⁸ By law, members of political parties, representatives of local executive authorities, officials of the prosecutor's office, courts, candidates and their close relatives, proxies and subordinates cannot serve on election commissions.

Sessions of the CEC and all lower-level election commissions are open to representatives of the media, political parties, and international observers. The CEC informed the ODIHR NAM that, in line with previous ODIHR recommendation, all its decisions will be made public through the media and its website.

The law provides for early voting for those who will be away from their polling station on election day.⁹ To take part, a voter must complete an application indicating the reason why s/he will be absent on election day, although no proof is required.

The CEC informed the ODIHR NAM that it is planning to launch an extensive training programme for all DEC and PEC members throughout the country, placing special emphasis on the new legal framework. The CEC also plans to organize large-scale public outreach and voter awareness campaigns on various aspects of the electoral process and to increase the participation of youth and vulnerable groups.¹⁰ Special measures are planned to facilitate independent participation and further protection of electoral rights of voters with disabilities. The CEC informed the ODIHR NAM that electoral materials, including related legislation and CEC regulations, will be published in both Uzbek and Russian. According to the law, ballots will be printed in the State language and potentially in other languages – based on a respective DEC decision – in areas where other languages are broadly spoken or used. The state broadcaster and state-owned national newspapers

⁸ *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.

⁹ Early voting starts ten days before election day and lasts for seven days. DECs decide on working schedule of PECs during early voting.

¹⁰ According to the CEC, some two million first-time voters are expected to participate in the elections.

are expected to provide candidates with opportunities to present their campaign platforms in minority languages. Most ODIHR NAM interlocutors acknowledged that proxy voting on behalf of several voters was practiced throughout the country, especially in rural areas, and welcomed the continuous efforts of the authorities to tackle this phenomenon.

D. VOTER REGISTRATION

All citizens over 18 years of age have the right to vote, except for those who have been declared incapacitated by a court decision or are serving a prison sentence for serious and grave crimes.¹¹ Those in pre-trial detention centres are eligible to vote.

Voter registration is passive. For the first time, the voter lists will be compiled based on the Single Electronic Voter Register (SEVR), which is extracted from the Information System on Electoral Process Management (ISEPM), based on a compilation of information from various government authorities, including the State Centre for Personalization under the Cabinet of Ministers, the Ministries of Interior, Justice, Defence, and Foreign Affairs. While the SEVR is overseen by the CEC, the ISEPM is maintained and operated by the Ministry for Development of Information Technologies and Communications (MDITC). SEVR is normally to be updated annually, while during election campaigns the updates are carried out based on a schedule approved by the CEC.

Voter lists will be extracted from the SEVR and compiled separately for each polling station. Lists of eligible voters temporarily residing at penitentiary institutions, military units, hospitals and other inpatient health institutions, as well as those who live abroad, are compiled by the heads of these institutions or respective diplomatic missions. Voters residing abroad will be able to cast their ballots in 57 polling stations established at diplomatic representations.¹²

Voters are granted the right to review their records in voter lists during a 15-day public scrutiny period at polling stations or through a dedicated tool to be created on the CEC website using their personal identification number. The ODIHR NAM was informed that the *mahalla* committees and PECs would conduct a door-to-door campaign in order to check the voter lists and that the inaccuracies would be corrected accordingly in the SEVR.

While the Election Code requires that changes to the voters lists stop three days prior to election day, the ODIHR NAM was informed that, as a temporary measure, voters could be added on election day to supplementary lists which will be used to update the SEVR after the end of the electoral process.

The ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed confidence that the SEVR will become operational for the upcoming elections, which they expect to lead to improved quality of the voter registration process, including prevention of multiple entries. The CEC and MDITC are planning voter awareness initiatives to explain changes in the election day proceedings following the planned introduction of a new voter registration system. The ODIHR NAM interlocutors noted general satisfaction with the ongoing efforts to improve and modernize the process, although some noted

¹¹ Blanket suffrage restrictions based on mental disability or convictions are at odds with OSCE commitments and other international standards. Paragraph 7.3 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document states that the participating States will “guarantee universal and equal suffrage to adult citizens”. Paragraph 14 of the 1996 UNHRC General Comment No. 25 states that grounds for deprivation of voting rights should be “objective and reasonable.” Deprivation of the right to vote on the basis of mental disability is inconsistent with Articles 12 and 29 of the UN CRPD which Uzbekistan signed in 2009.

¹² All votes cast abroad will be counted towards a specific constituency in Tashkent, as determined by the CEC.

concerns that it may not be sufficiently accurate citing the shortage of time, the complexity of interaction of the various bodies involved in the process and the large volume of information to be processed.

E. CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

Candidates for the lower chamber of the *Oliy Majlis* can only be put forward by registered political parties. Independent candidacies are not provided for by the law, despite a previous ODIHR recommendation. The registered political parties must submit the required documents, including at least 40,000 supporting signatures, to be allowed by the CEC to nominate candidates in the majoritarian constituencies.¹³ Positively, the Election Code permits a voter to sign in support of more than one political party seeking to contest an election, in line with international good practice and a previous ODIHR recommendation.

Candidates need to be at least 25 years of age and have permanently resided in Uzbekistan for at least 5 last years, which is at odds with international good practice.¹⁴ Citizens declared incapacitated by a court decision, those with uncancelled or uncleared convictions for committing grave or particularly grave crimes, active military or security personnel, and professional clergy of religious organizations are ineligible to stand. All five political parties intend to register candidates in each of the 150 constituencies and to adhere to the legally stipulated quota of 30 per cent for female candidates, although the Election Code does not stipulate any sanctions if the legal quota is not met and does not include any incentives or penalties. The formation of electoral coalitions is not provided for.

F. ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND CAMPAIGN FINANCE

The election campaign will commence 35 days before election day upon completion of candidate registration by the CEC. It is strictly regulated by law, and the election administration plays an active role in its conduct. The Election Code provides for equal campaign opportunities, including an equal amount of free coverage on state media and equal conditions for campaigning through private media, an equal number of outdoor campaign advertisements in every region, as determined by the CEC, and equality of opportunities and conditions for the organization of meetings with voters.¹⁵ The Election Code contains a prohibition to disseminate false information and information that discredits the honor and dignity of candidates. There is a campaign silence period on election day and the day preceding it. The Election Code prohibits the publication of opinion polls one day before election day and on election day, including online.

The ODIHR NAM interlocutors from the five political parties unanimously pointed out that they expect the ensuing campaign to be considerably more active than during the previous elections.

¹³ Political parties are not permitted to collect more than eight per cent of the required number of signatures in one administrative unit.

¹⁴ Paragraph 15 of the UN Human Rights Committee General Comment 25 states, in part, that “any restrictions on the right to stand for election...must be justifiable on objective and reasonable criteria. Persons who are otherwise eligible to stand for election should not be excluded by unreasonable or discriminatory requirements such as education, residence or descent, or by reason of political affiliation”. Uzbekistan has recognized the competence of the Human Rights Committee to receive and consider communications from individuals by acceding to Optional Protocol 1 to the ICCPR in 1995. See also Paragraph 1.1 (c) of the Code of Good Practices in Electoral Matters of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe, which details that “a length of residence requirement may be imposed on nationals solely for local or regional elections”.

¹⁵ Outdoor campaign materials are placed by the local administration in the locations determined by DECs. Local administration must provide equipped venues to candidates and political parties for their meetings with voters.

They attributed this to the increasing role of political parties, and the parliament as a whole, liberalisation of the political climate in the country, and increased expectations of the electorate in view of the ongoing reforms and modernisation efforts.

Political parties informed the ODIHR NAM that their candidates will target their distinct segments of the electorate and campaign on the basis of the general election programmes of the parties while also highlighting the local issues of their respective constituencies. Party programmes mainly focus on issues of social protection and economic development, underlining the need for stability, unity and gradual political and economic reforms. Parties intend to use billboards, banners, door-to-door gatherings, as well as advertisements in the media to reach out to voters. Parties noted the importance of social networks and online media as well as communication applications such as Telegram.

All election related expenses are funded by the state. The amount of state funding allocated to a political party depends on its number of registered candidates. For these elections, this amount is expected to be set at UZS 10 mln (an equivalent of some EUR 1,000) per candidate. Private funding specifically to parties or candidates for campaigning is prohibited; however, funds may be donated to the CEC which is required to spend them during election campaign or to distribute them equally among contestants. Donations from foreigners and foreign entities are prohibited. The provision of financial payments or gifts to voters during campaign events is not permitted.

According to the legislation, once a year, political parties must submit financial reports to the Chamber of Accounts. Additionally, in accordance with legislation, political parties are required to submit a report on their campaign expenses within 20 days of the election to the CEC. Besides that, the annual budgets of political parties are published and presented to the lower chamber of the *Oliy Majlis*. They include a statement from the CEC, Chamber of Accounts and Ministry of Justice on party financial incomes and expenses during parliamentary election campaigns.

G. MEDIA

The Constitution provides for the right to access information and for freedom of expression, yet it holds media liable for the “trustworthiness” of disseminated information. Primary legislation further limits the freedom to report, by holding intermediaries liable for third-party content hosted on their platforms.¹⁶ 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. All media, including print and broadcast outlets, as well as websites, are subject to registration by the Agency of Information and Mass Communications (AIMC) which is overseen by the President. According to some ODIHR NAM interlocutors, the legal framework jeopardizes political pluralism in the media.

Despite the existence of several television stations with national coverage, some ODIHR NAM interlocutors stated that the level of impartiality and diversity of information in broadcast media is limited. Social media are increasingly used as a source of political information in urban areas. Online sources strive to challenge the traditional approaches to covering domestic events, including the electoral processes. Positively, the AIMC restored access to multiple internet-based media in

¹⁶ The Law on Informatization provides a definition of a ‘blogger’ and oblige 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.

Uzbekistan, after more than ten years of intermittent blocking.¹⁷ Notably, starting from 2017, a number of journalists have been released from prison.¹⁸

According to the law, all electoral contestants will be provided an equal amount of free airtime in state broadcast media and space in print media for the purpose of campaigning. The exact amount of free airtime and space will be determined by the CEC. In addition, electoral contestants will be able to purchase airtime for political advertisement, and a number of them informed the ODIHR NAM that they plan to do so. The ODIHR NAM was informed that both the state broadcaster and private channels plan to organize debates between representatives of political parties, as well as a variety of election-related programmes, such as interviews, talk shows, and voter education discussions.

H. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

The election dispute resolution is regulated by the Election Code and CEC resolutions. Overall, there is a hierarchical structure as complaints against decisions and actions of election commissions may be filed with higher-level commissions. The law does not address inaction and possible failures by commissions to act on their legal obligations. Complaints should be filed within 10 days after the decision has been taken and can be submitted either to the higher-level election commission or the court, which are obliged by the law to address them within 3 days (or immediately if the complaint is submitted less than 6 days before the elections). Complaints about decisions of the CEC can be filed with the Supreme Court.

In contrast to complaints filed with election commissions, those submitted to the courts require a public hearing with the presence of the parties concerned. Commissions are obliged to register complaints received and dealt with in a logbook and to notify the complainants of a decision taken in writing. However, there is no explicit obligation to publish decisions on complaints. The CEC may invalidate an election, totally or partially. A CEC decision invalidating the election may only be appealed by candidates and should be filed to the Supreme Court within ten days following the publication of election results. The Election Code does not contain provisions on requests for recounts or for the invalidation of results. The CEC and the Ombudsman will operate hotlines for receiving election-related complaints.

I. CITIZEN AND INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION

Legislation provides for international election observation but, despite previous ODIHR recommendations and at odds with of Paragraph 8 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document, does not contain provisions for citizen election observation.¹⁹ International observers are to be accredited by the CEC and are obliged to adhere to the regulations specified in the Election Code. Among other things, international observers are entitled to be present at the sessions of the DEC and PECs,

¹⁷ See [the statement](#) by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) of 15 May 2019 welcoming the unblocking of media and information websites, including *Asia Terra*, *Uzmetronom*, *Fergana Agency*, *Eurasia.net*, *Centre 1*, *Deutsche Welle*, *Voice of America* and *BBC* and their Uzbek-language services, as well as sites of human rights organizations, such as Reporters Without Borders and Human Rights Watch.

¹⁸ According to the [Committee to Protect Journalists](#), the release of the last two imprisoned journalists in 2018 marked the first time in two decades that no journalists were in prison. See also statements by the OSCE RFoM from [7 May 2018](#), [22 March 2018](#), [2 March 2018](#) and [5 October 2017](#).

¹⁹ Paragraph 8 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document states that “The participating States consider that the presence of observers, both foreign and domestic, can enhance the electoral process for States in which elections are taking place.”

as well as to receive certified copies of election results protocols. Only international observers are entitled to conduct press conferences and give interviews.

Electoral contestants are entitled to nominate political party agents as well as candidate proxies who can be present at polling stations on election day and file complaints on behalf of the contestants. The Election Code also extends the right to observe election day proceedings to the representatives of the *mahalla* committees. The ODIHR NAM was informed by the five political parties contesting the elections that they will deploy a large number of their representatives both as party agents and candidate proxies on election day.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

All interlocutors met with during the ODIHR NAM underscored the need for an ODIHR election observation activity for the parliamentary elections noting that an external assessment would be of added value. Representatives of official bodies emphasized that the electoral process would be transparent and that any recommendations for potential improvement of the process would be welcome. In considering an observation activity, the ODIHR NAM has taken into account the various findings outlined in this report. Specific aspects that could benefit from review include the implementation of a substantially revised legal framework, the work of election administration at all levels, including the on-going efforts of the authorities to prevent proxy voting and the conduct of election day procedures, the new system of voter registration, and the environment and conduct of the electoral campaign, including media coverage.

On this basis, and despite outstanding issues with regard to the respect of fundamental freedoms, the ODIHR NAM recommends the deployment of an election observation mission for the 2019 parliamentary elections. In addition to a core team of experts, ODIHR will request the secondment by OSCE participating States of 30 long-term observers to follow the election process countrywide, as well as 250 short-term observers to follow election day procedures. In line with ODIHR's standard methodology, the EOM would include a media monitoring element.

ANNEX: LIST OF MEETINGS

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ilhomjon Nematov, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs
Gulyamjon Pirimkulov, Directorate-General for Multilateral Co-operation

Central Election Commission

Mirza-Ulugbek Abdusalomov, Chairperson
Gulnoza Rakhimova, Deputy Chairperson

Senate of the Oliy Majlis

Sodiq Safoyev, First Deputy Chairperson
Alisher Kurmanov, Committee on International Relations, Foreign Economic Relations,
Investments and Tourism
Afzal Artikov, Head of International Relations Department

Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis

Akmal Saidov, Member of Parliament
Aliya Yunosova, Member of Parliament
Jahongir Shirinov, Member of Parliament
Abdullajjon Hamrakulov, Member of Parliament
Ibrohim Hadjiyev, Member of Parliament
Sherzod Amirov, Member of Parliament

Supreme Court

Bakhtiyar Isakov, Deputy Chairperson
Alimdjan Kariev, Head of International Law Division
Davlat Bobonorov, Judge
Surrayo Khojamkulova, Senior Consultant

Chamber of Accounts

Olimkhon Rustamov, First Deputy Chairperson
Ulugbek Kadirov, Head of Sector
Davron Karimjonov, Inspector
Ismonjon Mamadjanov, Lead Inspector

Ministry of Justice

Makhmud Istamov, First Deputy Minister
Dilafruz Sufiyeva, Head of Department
Zikrilla Makhmudov, Head of the Department of Non-governmental, Non-profit and Religious
Associations
Zaurbek Aslanov, International Relations Department

Ministry for Development of Information Technologies and Communications

Olimjon Umarov, First Deputy Minister
Bakrom Ziyayev, Head of Department

Agency of Information and Mass Communications

Avazbek Khodjimetrov, First Deputy Director

Dilshod Saidjanov, Head of Information Policy Department

Ombudsperson's Office

Ulugbek Mukhammadiyev, Ombudsman

Media

Alisher Khadjayev, Chairperson, National Television and Radio Company

Khayrulla Nuritdinov, First Deputy Chairperson, National Television and Radio Company

Political Parties (in alphabetical order)

Democratic Party “*Milliy Tiklanish*”

Alisher Kadirov, Chairperson of the Executive Committee

Nodir Mukhtorov, Member

Firuz Mukhamedjanova, Member

Ecological Party

Boriy Alikhanov, Chairperson of the Executive Committee

Liberal Democratic Party of Uzbekistan *UzLiDeP*

Aktam Khaitov, Chairperson

Bakhtiyor Yakubov, Deputy Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Political Council Azamat

Seitov, Head of Department for international co-operation

Alisher Makhamov, Head of section on ideological work

People's Democratic Party

Ulugbek Inoyatov, Chairperson of the Central Council

Maksuda Vorisova, Deputy Chairperson

Ulugbek Vafayev, Deputy Chairperson

Social Democratic Party of Uzbekistan “*Adolat*”

Nariman Umarov, Chairperson

Abdukamol Rakhmonov, Deputy Chairperson of the Political Council

Civil Society

Rustam Kamilov, Director, Independent Institute for Monitoring the Formation of Civil Society

Kudratilla Rafikov, Chairperson, Federation of Trade Unions

International Community

Helena Fraser, UN Resident Co-ordinator

Natasa Rasic, Deputy Chief of Party, USAID Judicial Reform Programme, Tetra Tech

Diplomatic Community

Representatives of Embassies of OSCE Participating States