

OSCE parliamentary delegation observes ‘vibrant’ election in UK



Labour Party representative Alicia Kennedy speaking to President Joao Soares (Portugal) and George Tsereteli (Georgia)



Tajik MPs Muhiddin Kabirov and Jumaboy Sanginov, with Joao Soares in the background



Azeri MPs Azay Guliyev (left) and Bahar Muradova (right) with Mayor of Kensington and Chelsea Timothy Coleridge (centre)

The 6 May general elections in the United Kingdom demonstrated that democracy is a vibrant force in the world’s oldest parliamentary system, concluded the OSCE PA’s observer delegation in a statement issued on 7 May. In particular, direct debates between the leaders of the three major parties sparked interest in the democratic process and in public policy in the United Kingdom.

“This is one of the most exciting and competitive elections I have ever seen, although it shows that reform may be needed to the complex system,” said OSCE PA President Joao Soares, leader of the OSCE delegation. “We welcome the recognition of need for reform of procedures expressed by the major political parties.”

Legislation governing elections is clearly understood by practitioners and stakeholders, the observers noted, and is underpinned by widespread trust in the electoral system. The delegation, however, expressed concern about reports that voters who were lining up to vote at the time of closing were not allowed to vote. Some interlocutors expressed concern about the possible vulnerability to fraud of postal voting, despite safeguards introduced in 2006.

Unlike most other electoral systems in the OSCE, the pure first-past-the-post system in the United Kingdom allows for a distribution of seats in parliament which does not reflect the preference of the general electorate in the United Kingdom.

The parties’ campaigns were widely covered in the media. Free television was provided for major contestants and the absence of paid political advertising provided for a level playing field. The pluralistic press reflected the wide spectrum of views.

The OSCE PA delegation included Members of Parliament from Azerbaijan, Georgia, Italy, Kazakhstan, Portugal, Russia and Tajikistan. In addition to leading the Assembly’s delegation, President Soares was also appointed to lead the OSCE observation mission by the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, Kazakhstan’s Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev.

As part of the ongoing observation, the OSCE PA delegation was briefed for several days prior to election day in London by officials from the Electoral Commission and the Library

of the House of Commons, representatives from the major political parties, the media and civil society.

The parliamentarians deployed in the London and Manchester areas to follow preparation at polling stations, actual voting processes, the handling of postal ballots, and the open, transparent counting procedure. In both areas, observers were briefed by election administrators.

The parliamentary delegation was supported by Secretary General Spencer Oliver, Deputy Secretary General Tina Schoen, Presidential Advisor Andreas Baker and Senior Counsellor Semyon Dzakhaev.

Christmas-Moeller and Lennmarker visit Tajikistan



OSCE PA Vice-President Christmas-Moeller, Political Officer of the OSCE Office in Tajikistan Frank Johansen, Deputy Head of the OSCE Office in Tajikistan Klaus Rasmussen, and President Emeritus Goran Lennmarker

OSCE PA Vice-President Pia Christmas-Moeller (Denmark) and OSCE PA President Emeritus Goran Lennmarker (Sweden) are in Tajikistan from 10 to 13 May, meeting with Tajik election authorities, parliamentarians and representatives from the Foreign Ministry. The PA delegation’s visit also includes briefings by the OSCE field mission, and meetings with representatives of political parties, civil society and the international community.

Having led the OSCE’s observation mission to Tajikistan’s 28 February parliamentary elections, Ms. Christmas-Moeller is following up on some of the key OSCE comments regarding the electoral process in the country. Discussions are focusing on Tajikistan’s political development, the role of parliament in the country, co-operation with Afghanistan and Tajikistan’s role in the region and in the OSCE more broadly. The delegation is supported by Programme Officer Anna Chernova.