



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Report by the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Katherine Brucker
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 31, 2024

Ambassador Karttunen, welcome to the OSCE and the Permanent Council and thank you for your leadership. We are thrilled to have you in Tashkent and value your close coordination with the government of Uzbekistan.

We, like you, have paid close attention to the parliamentary elections that took place this past weekend and we fully endorse the findings of the OSCE observer mission's preliminary assessment. As noted in the OSCE report, the elections did not provide voters with a genuine choice, despite being technically well-prepared. Significant challenges to meeting international election best practices remain, including the registration of political parties. We encourage Uzbekistani authorities to take seriously ODIHR's recommendations and to implement reforms necessary to bring its elections fully in line with its OSCE commitments.

Ambassador, we support your office's focus on advancing human rights, including your commitment to train legal professionals on international human rights laws and best practices. We welcome Uzbekistan's progress on gender equality, disability rights, and prisoners' rights. We remain concerned about ongoing restrictions on the exercise of freedom of expression in Uzbekistan and note the harassment and incarceration of independent journalists and bloggers, such as the detention of Murod Maksudov. We urge your office to engage in initiatives that encourage the development of free public dialogue and an engaged and independent civil society.

Your office's work on economic and security challenges is extremely important. Your programs combating money laundering and terrorism financing are crucial for strengthening financial integrity. Equally important are initiatives empowering women entrepreneurs, which promote economic inclusion and security.

The OSCE Project Coordinator in Uzbekistan – like all other field missions, the Secretariat, and the autonomous institutions – unfortunately faces significant operational difficulties due to severe financial constraints. The inability of participating States to adopt a unified budget has placed undue strain on all field missions' abilities to effectively carry out their mandates, affecting everything from staffing and resources - as you have reminded us - to program implementation. We urge all participating States to join consensus to adopt the Unified Budget as soon as possible. And - as people will get tired of hearing me say - we have a golden opportunity to adopt both the 2024 and 2025 Unified Budgets in the coming weeks and to put the organization on stable footing.

Ambassador Karttunen, we greatly appreciate your and your hard-working staff's vital work in Uzbekistan.