

UK responds at OSCE to Russian State Duma elections

Thank you Madam Chair,

The State Duma elections which took place from 17 to 19 September represent a serious decline in democratic freedoms and fundamental rights in Russia. The conditions in which the elections took place were not conducive to free and fair elections.

The Russian authorities' targeted use of laws on so called "undesirable organisations", "foreign agents", and "extremist organisations" marginalised civil society, silenced independent media, and excluded independent opposition candidates from participating in the elections.

Election observation is a key element of democratic scrutiny. We are disappointed by the undue limitations that Russia placed on election monitoring, which prevented the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the OSCE's Parliamentary Assembly from observing the elections and providing Russian voters with a transparent and authoritative assessment of their State Duma elections.

Furthermore, we condemn the holding of these elections on the sovereign territory of Ukraine and Georgia. The annexation of Crimea by Russia in March 2014 was illegal and illegitimate, and remains so to this day. We reiterate our firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and Georgia within their internationally recognized borders.

The Russian authorities' efforts to control the election process undermines political plurality, disregards the civil and political rights of Russian citizens, and contradicts its commitments as an OSCE participating State.

We urge the Russian authorities to end its repression of civil society, independent media, and independent opposition figures, and take all measures necessary to fulfil their obligations under the OSCE's Human Dimension and other international human rights commitments.